

**The foundations of the creed.**

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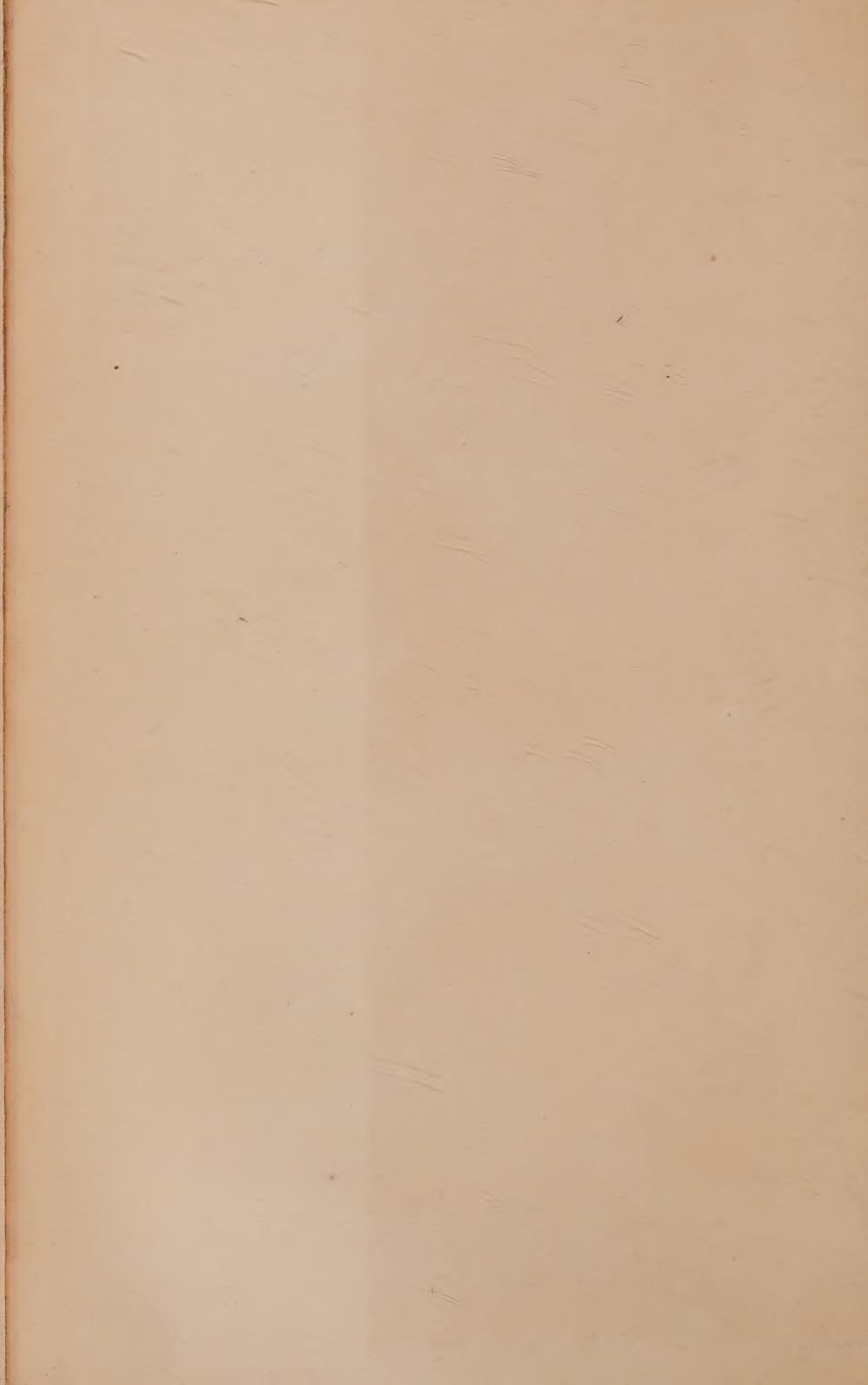
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THE FOUNDATIONS  
OF  
THE CREED

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# THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE CREED

By HARVEY GOODWIN, D.D., D.C.L.

LORD BISHOP OF CARLISLE

HONORARY FELLOW OF GONVILLE AND CAIUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

'Other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid,  
which is Jesus Christ.'

---

ὡς φρονίμοις λέγω

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THIRD EDITION

LONDON  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET  
1899

‘THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS THE PERFECTION OF HUMAN  
INTELLIGENCE’—Coleridge (*Aids to Reflection*)

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To

SIR GEORGE GABRIEL STOKES, BART., M.P.

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY:

LUCASIAN PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE:  
 ETC. ETC.

My dear Sir George,

*I thank you with all sincerity for your kindness in permitting me to dedicate this volume to you.*

*The connection of your name with my book is precious to me as marking a friendship of nearly half a century; but it is much more precious as a public declaration, that the President of the Royal Society—the successor of Sir Isaac Newton in almost all the posts and honours held by the father of physical mathematical science—does not think it unworthy of his position to acknowledge his interest in the question of the Foundations of the Christian Creed.*

*It is almost needless to say that the use of your name is not to be taken as implying your concurrence in all the statements and arguments which this volume contains. At the same time I venture to express the belief, that the treatment of the subject which has been adopted is such as, upon the whole, will commend itself to your judgment.*

*I am, my dear Sir George, with every feeling of affectionate and respectful regard,*

Yours sincerely,

HARVEY CARLISLE.

Rose Castle : October 9, 1889.

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*O Almighty God, who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST Himself being the head corner-stone; Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## *TO THE READER*

It will, perhaps, be deemed equally presumptuous to praise or to blame Bishop Pearson's great work upon the Apostles' Creed. The character of a book which has lived for two centuries, and still stands alone in its special department of theology, is manifest without assertion and without argument. No one can have read the exposition without being impressed by its learning, its dignity, its fulness, as well as by the piety of its tone, and the beauty of its language. It is a monument of theological learning, which must for ever remain a precious possession to the Church of Christ, specially to that branch of the Church in whose language it is written, and of which the writer was so conspicuous an ornament.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to deny that in some respects Bishop Pearson's book belongs to the seventeenth rather than to the nineteenth century. Few books are independent of the century in which they are written; perhaps in the department of controversy, or in that of subjects concerning which controversy may be raised no book can be entirely independent.

Facts will be assumed as indubitable upon which subsequent investigation will have cast reasonable doubt; or arguments will be addressed to a condition of thought which has passed away; or the whole surroundings of a subject will have been so altered that the views which are effective in one age cease to be effective in another, and things have to be reconsidered in new lights. Take the subject of Christian Apologetics as an example. Let the whole series of apologies, from Justin Martyr and Tertullian down to Butler and Paley, be passed in review. It is difficult for modern Christians to understand the cogency of some of the arguments adduced by the earlier of the series; while we find the line of argument adopted by Paley regarded less favourably than it used to be, and even some of the weighty reasoning of Butler appears to have less power of conviction than it had in days gone by. Spiritual warfare may, perhaps, have some analogy to secular; and the fortifications, arms, and accoutrements, which supply the needs of one generation, may become practically useless to those which follow.

This being so, I trust that it may be deemed justifiable to say, that in some respects Pearson's great work fails to meet all the wants which are naturally and properly felt by those who, in our own days, study and think about the Apostles' Creed. In addition to the considerations already urged as to the changes of thought and feeling and circumstances, necessarily produced by lapse of time, the conditions



under which the work was originally produced may, perhaps, lead us to believe that there are certain aspects of the subject, which would be unlikely to obtain adequate consideration and corresponding adequacy of treatment. The *Exposition of the Creed* was, as we learn from the dedication of the work 'to the Right Worshipful and Wellbeloved the Parishioners of St. Clement's, East Cheap,' originally composed in the form of a series of Sermons or Parochial Lectures. Before publication these appear to have been recast, and their homiletical form to have been discarded: nevertheless, if I am not mistaken, the original character of the Exposition, as addressed to the faithful within the walls of a church, has left its mark upon the work in its subsequent form. I do not mean that the author, as speaking to a Christian congregation, omits to deal with objections made by unbelievers and heretics; this undoubtedly is not the case. In the prefatory remarks addressed 'To the Reader,' he tells us that he has 'made use of such arguments and reasons as are most proper to oppose the atheists, who deny there is a God to be worshipped, a religion to be professed.' Again he writes that he has prosecuted such truths as were delivered by Christ and His Apostles, 'with an eye to the Jews, who obstinately deny them, expecting still another Messiah to come.' And once more, he writes, 'As our religion is Catholic, it holdeth fast that *faith which was once delivered to the saints*, and since preserved in the Church; and therefore I expound such verities, in opposition to the

heretics arising in all ages, especially against the Photinians, who of all the rest have most perverted the articles of our Creed, and found out followers in these latter ages, who have erected a new body of divinity in opposition to the Catholic theology.' Thus, the reader, sitting (as it were) inside the Church, is armed against those who, by the nature of the case, are outside. I am not so sure that he is protected against those doubts and difficulties which he carries about with him in his own heart. This side of the subject does not appear to me to meet with sufficient treatment at Bishop Pearson's hands. Jews and Photinians may be confuted, but fightings and fears may remain. The Israelites saw the armies of Pharaoh lying dead upon the sea-shore ; but they had, notwithstanding, years of weary wandering, and much suffering and discipline to undergo, before they reached the promised land of rest.

In other words, it seems possible that an anxious thinker and inquirer, who wishes to know clearly what the Christian Church holds and why she holds it, who feels the force and pressure of adverse arguments which he meets with as common things, who finds men of scientific pre-eminence and high culture, and not deficient in learning, adopting an attitude of hostility towards the Christian Faith—it seems possible that such an one (and surely there are many such) may read *Pearson on the Creed*, and not find in the book all that his soul craves. If this be so, it is undoubtedly desirable that an effort should be made to supply what is wanting. Such efforts are made day by day. Every

controversial book, or article in a periodical, or lecture, or sermon, or what not, written for the purpose of vindicating particular points, or combating particular attacks, is an effort in the direction indicated: but it has appeared to me, that, in addition to all these efforts, it would be useful that an attempt should be made to present to English readers something of the nature of a discussion of the whole question of the Foundations of the Creed. Such a work, if fairly and honestly executed, seemed to me likely to do some good in its generation. According to the views already propounded, it cannot hope for a very permanent existence. The attacks upon the faith will vary in time to come, as they have in time past: and the defences of the faith must be modified accordingly, while the faith itself ever remains the same. Nevertheless, within certain limits, a useful result may be achieved.

These remarks lead up to the idea which I have attempted to embody in the following pages. I wish I had as much confidence in the embodiment, as I have in the idea. If the reader should come to the opinion that the work might have been done much better than it has been done, that opinion will coincide very much with my own. But if only a suggestion has been made, which in other hands may lead to better results, the author will not be dissatisfied. What he desires—so far as he can appreciate his own aims—is this, to give a helping hand to his brethren who are travelling upon the road, which should be and may be enlightened by faith in the Father who made us, the

Son who has redeemed us, and the Holy Ghost who sanctifies us.

In the midst of religious and irreligious controversy, amid intellectual doubts and difficulties resulting from the progress of science and the speculative conclusions of scholars, in days which are felt by many to be *days of trouble and of rebuke and of blasphemy*, it is well that it should be possible to explain simply and clearly to doubters or inquirers, or even to professed believers, what it is that they ought to believe, and why they ought to believe it. Not unfrequently, if I am not mistaken, hearts are made sad, which God does not desire to make sad, by unauthorised claims made on behalf of matters concerning which the Church has not required that faith should be expressed. A doctrine may be true, may be such as ought to demand the assent of those who are commissioned to preach the Gospel to others, may be one concerning which it may be well that preachers should speak in the pulpit, and yet it may never have been marked by any adequate authority, as of such a kind that the profession of it should be required from the rank and file of the Army of Christ. In fact, if we calmly examine the matter, we shall perceive that the simpler the profession of faith required, so much the better for the army and for all concerned. The intention is to include, not to exclude : to embrace the whole world, if it will be embraced : not to leave any single soul outside, because the terms of admission appear hard. The commission of Christ to His Apostles was, that they should *go into all the*



*world*, and baptize men in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And it would seem that the origin of the Creed was a baptismal formula, corresponding to the commission of Christ, namely this: *I believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost*. The Apostles' Creed should be regarded primarily as the expansion and exposition of this formula: no doubt it has been much expanded and much expounded; but when we look to the vast ocean of theological discussion, and the infinite number of questions which have been raised, whether within the Church or without it, the wonder is, not that so much should have been added to the original formula of faith in the Holy Trinity, but rather that the additions should have been so sparing, and that the symbol should have remained so simple and so uncontroversial.

In illustration of what has now been said, I will ask the reader to note some few of the questions which have exercised the minds of Christians, which do exercise them to some extent still, and to which nevertheless no reference whatever is made in the Apostles' Creed. For my own guidance, and in order to avoid the introduction of any point not of real importance, I will confine myself to truths or doctrines which are comprised in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England.

1. *The sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation* (Art. VI.)—The reader will observe that nothing corresponding to this article is contained in the Apostles' Creed. The whole subject of Holy Scripture, the nature of its inspiration, the connection between

the Old Testament and the New, the value of those other books which 'the Church doth read for example of life and manners,' and other cognate questions, are entirely omitted. It would be wrong to argue on this account that there is no recognised doctrine on some or all of the points enumerated; but it is quite certain that a postulant for baptism is not bound to have formed an opinion upon them.

2. *Original or Birth-sin* (Art. IX.)—This article introduces the whole Pelagian controversy, and is at the root of much of the theology of St. Augustine. As involving the doctrine of the free grace of God, it may perhaps be regarded as second to none in importance. Nevertheless there is no reference to it in the Apostles' Creed: except so far as it is included in the simple and gracious sentence, which speaks of *the forgiveness of sins*.

3. *The Justification of Man* (Art. XI.)—This introduces the whole of the Lutheran controversy: it is needless to speak of the dimensions which that controversy at one time assumed. It would be incorrect to say that the Apostles' Creed contains no reference to the subject, because in rehearsing the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, a reference is made in the best possible way; but there is no controversial reference: no definition of the manner in which the sacrifice of Christ is applied: no hint of those dark questions which have puzzled so many minds.

4. *Predestination and Election* (Art. XVII.)—Few

questions have agitated the Church more, or for a longer time, than those of predestination and election. Yet, perhaps, they may be said to be fundamentally metaphysical rather than religious; and undoubtedly they are not of a kind to require earnest consideration on the part of every simple Christian. There is no trace of them in the Apostles' Creed.

5. *Of the authority of the Church* (Art. XX.)—No more difficult or thorny subject could be mentioned. I cite it, chiefly for the purpose of comparing it with what is said about the Church in the Creed. The Church could not possibly be omitted; but the reader would do well to notice the manner in which it is introduced: nothing concerning the Church's authority, though this be an important subject in its proper place: but only this,—‘The Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints.’

6. *The Sacraments* (Art. XXV.)—There may perhaps be said to be an oblique reference to the Sacrament of baptism in the words *the remission of sins*: at all events, this sentence is expanded by the Nicene symbol into the words *one baptism for the remission of sins*. In truth, if we regard the Apostles' Creed as the baptismal symbol, the postulant may be regarded as expressing his belief concerning baptism by the very fact that he is seeking it: and with regard to the other great Sacrament, it may be suggested that it would be time enough to express faith concerning it, when the approach to the Lord's Table should make the question a practical one. Anyhow, the fact remains, and it is a

striking one, that no declaration of belief concerning the Sacraments is contained in the Apostles' Creed.

These six examples will abundantly illustrate the point which I have wished to impress upon the reader's mind. I have, as needs scarcely be said, no desire to depreciate the importance of the dogmas or doctrines to which reference has been made : the more important they are, the more striking is their absence from the Apostles' Creed. My point is, that there is a manifest intention to keep that Creed in the simplest form possible, that a large portion of Christian doctrine and almost the whole of Christian controversy are excluded, and that, nevertheless, no test of belief beyond the Apostles' Creed may be, or is, required as the condition of being a professed disciple of Christ. So that when men talk as they sometimes rather loosely do about *Christianity*, they may be reminded that Christianity in its simplest and ultimate form is the Apostles' Creed ; and in like manner attacks upon Christianity are not to be regarded as fatal, unless they are successful in shewing that the Apostles' Creed cannot be held by honest and reasonable men.

I trust that what has now been written will not cause the reader to conclude, that the author of this volume desires to represent the field of theology as more contracted than the great Doctors of the Church have considered it to be, or the Faith as less deep and less mysterious than it really is. But certainly it seems right, that both timid believers and those who are ready to put obstacles in the timid believer's way,



should bear in mind how few, and how comparatively simple, are the essentials of the Christian faith, and how true it is, in accordance with the saying of Gregory the Great, that if there be depths in which elephants must swim, there are also fords in which lambs may wade. I have sometimes met with persons whose minds have been vexed and unsettled by the ingenious presentation of difficult points, upon which a disciple of Christ is by no means bound to express an opinion, much less to permit the question of his loyalty to his Master and the peace of his own mind to depend. I have bidden such troubled souls to look the difficulty in the face, not to permit it to tyrannise over them, not to regard a difficulty unsolved as a fatal obstacle to faith in the Son of God. How much of science or of philosophy would be left to us, if difficulties unsolved were regarded as fatal to reasonable theories?

The tendency of the following pages is to represent the force and the meaning of the Apostles' Creed as concentrated in the person and history of Jesus Christ, and to reduce the difficulty of accepting the Creed to that of accepting the Incarnation. The thought is to myself a familiar one. Many years ago, when called upon to preach, as Hulsean lecturer, before the University of Cambridge, I took for my subject, *The Doctrines and Difficulties of the Christian Faith contemplated from the standing-ground afforded by the Catholic Doctrine of the Being of our Lord Jesus Christ*. I thought then, and I think still, that the

best course for anyone who has doubts and difficulties concerning the Creed is to assume this great doctrine as a stand-point, and to contemplate the doubts and difficulties as they appear when seen from thence. The Incarnation may, no doubt, be regarded as the crowning truth, towards which the soul must laboriously climb by help of evidences, of Scripture proof, of the doctrine of inspiration, and of other means more or less effectual. I shall not argue against this course: let those who find it profitable take it, and God speed them; it matters little by what path men go, so that they find Christ. But to my own mind the method of which I have spoken—beginning with the Incarnation and working downwards—is the most entirely satisfactory: with that great assumption, which seems so thoroughly to meet the wants of man and to be suggested by those wants, all the elements of Christian belief seem to fall into their places, and the whole becomes consistent and satisfying to the human soul. *He who spared not His own Son . . . how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?*

If I may draw an illustration from a subject, to which I have referred in the course of this book, I would observe that in dealing with the mechanical system of the universe, the usual course is not to present a number of arguments or courses of reasoning, which lead up to the principle of Universal Gravitation, but to commence with a bold assumption of that principle, and to trace its consequences: this at least is one way, perhaps the best way, in which the

subject can be presented : and if we do make this great assumption, we find that the mysteries of cosmic motion, which seemed so complicated, become simple, when regarded as deductions from the one great fundamental principle. In some sense they are as mysterious as ever : but though mysterious, all difficulty in apprehending and in believing them is effectually and for ever banished.

Inscribed on the title-page of this book are the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, *ὡς φρονίμοις λέγω* ; they are to be taken as indicating the spirit in which the book has been written and published, and the class of persons to whom it is addressed. The Authorised Version uses the word *wise*. *I speak as unto wise men*. The Revised Version does not attempt to mend the rendering. The 'Speaker's Commentary' suggests the word *intelligent*. This suggestion is worthy of attention, when we consider the manner in which the word *wise* is used in the same Epistle, and elsewhere. The English reader naturally looks back to the opening chapter of the Epistle, in which St. Paul speaks in somewhat contemptuous terms of the *wise* and of *wisdom*. *Where, he asks, is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*. And again, a few verses lower down he writes : *Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the*

*flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called : but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.* There would seem to be some inconsistency in first depreciating human *wisdom* and subsequently appealing to men as *wise*. But in truth there is no inconsistency ; and though the ingenuity of translators, both ancient and modern, seems to have been insufficient to find any word except *wise* to represent St. Paul's language, the adjective used in the first chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians is different from that in the tenth : the apparent inconsistency is in the English, not in the Greek : σοφός and φρόνιμος are the two words. The former, Liddell and Scott tell us, means 'skilled in the sciences, learned, profound' ; the latter 'thoughtful, sensible, prudent.' It is not asserted that the two words may not sometimes approximate in meaning ; but it is clear that they are used by St. Paul with some such difference of signification as is indicated by the equivalent English words now quoted. The difference is a wide one, corresponding to a wide difference which may be noted in practical life. A man may be deeply versed in some scientific, literary, or philosophical subject, and yet may be deficient in practical wisdom and good sense : his high mental tastes and studies may tend to disqualify him for wise judgment in the ordinary affairs of life : while another man may have had no opportunity, perhaps no natural power, of diving into intellectual mysteries, and yet may be so intelligent, sensible, full of practical judgment, as to deserve the



name of wise. The words, therefore, upon my title-page, quoted from St. Paul, are intended to express an appeal to the thoughtful judgment of thoughtful men: to affirm that Christian believers appeal concerning their creed as honest men to honest men: to repudiate the notion that Christian belief is the property only of weak, credulous people, and to assert that it is held by thinking men upon grounds which, according to the judgment of those thinking men, are sound and solid.

It is well that this view of the matter should be presented frankly and clearly: the holders of the Creed are not surprised that men should find difficulties clinging to it: many devout believers in Christ have found such difficulties in the course of their own experience: the doctrines of the Gospel of Christ cannot be proved in the same fashion as the truths of geometry, the theorems of algebra, the generalisations of physical science, or even the facts of history: were it so, there would be no place for faith, no demand for a Creed. But, on the other hand, the profession of faith, the acceptance of a Creed, means no treason to the intellect; and a man may have sounded all the depths of all the sciences, and yet may say with perfect honesty and perfect simplicity, I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

I cannot expect that all difficulties will be banished for thoughtful minds by this volume. My best hope is that it may suggest to some of my brothers and

sisters useful thoughts concerning the foundations of that Creed, the recognition of which gives to them and me our common claim to membership in the Church of Christ. With the expression of this hope, I send my book upon its errand, and I pray that the life-giving power of the Holy Ghost may rest upon it !

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I HAVE every reason to be satisfied with the manner in which this work has been received. I venture to conclude that the question of the foundations of the Creed is widely regarded as one requiring treatment, and that the treatment which the question has received at my hands has at least pointed in the right direction.

In preparing this Second Edition I have written a few paragraphs in further elucidation of certain points, as well as some additional notes. I have also printed, as a kind of preface to each chapter, some ancient form of Creed, giving the date in each instance. These Creeds have been selected from that most useful and interesting volume, Dr Heurtley's *Harmonia Symbolica*. They have been chosen upon no definite principle, except that which is supplied by the desire to bring under the reader's notice the substantial unity and circumstantial variety of the forms of Creed used in different branches of the Church of Christ throughout all the centuries. The student of the foundations of the Creed will receive profit, and may perhaps, be tempted to go more deeply into the subject, if his attention be fixed upon the remarkable phenomenon of the practical uniformity of the Creed of Christendom, from the beginning till now.

A few points suggest themselves for observation, as arising out of criticisms which have come under my notice.

I am particularly desirous of not being misunderstood with regard to what is said concerning the omission of important dogmas or doctrines from the Apostles' Creed. In my prefatory address *To the Reader*, I have called attention to the undeniable fact that such omission exists. This is a simple truth, which cannot be controverted; and it is manifest that to call attention to the omission of a doctrine is by no means necessarily to disparage it. An omitted doctrine may be of the highest order

of importance—I have not desired even to hint the contrary—but it may be unwise to claim assent to it as a condition of being admitted into the Church of Christ by baptism; and this may be a sufficient ground for its exclusion from the catalogue of articles of belief comprised in the Apostles' Creed. I do not, however, deny that I have desired to press upon the reader's mind this important and practical conclusion, namely, that the essentials of Christian belief are fewer, and in a certain sense more simple, than might be supposed from some of our controversial discussions: and so I may be able to accept the figure adopted by one of my reviewers, who, with reference to what I have said on this subject, speaks of me as "clearing the decks for action." Only I must claim that the clearance has been effected, not by throwing cargo overboard, but by putting it in security below decks, where it may be kept for future use, when the engagement is over and the victory won.

Again, it has been noted that my book is deficient in references to the writings of the Fathers. It perhaps might be pleaded that there was not much to be gleaned in this field, after it had been reaped by such men as Bishop Pearson. But, in truth, the special purpose of this work is not likely to be served by patristic authority, so much as some might imagine. The line of thought, characteristic of minds which have difficulties concerning the Apostles' Creed, is not usually of a nature to be seriously influenced by reference to the great writers of the early centuries: the difficulties of those days are not the difficulties of our own: we must be prepared to a great extent to bear our own burdens upon our own shoulders.

It has also been noted with some surprise that, on the other hand, the names of contemporary writers, conspicuous in religio-scientific controversy, should have been almost entirely omitted. I am prepared to defend the omission. I have been desirous of divesting the book of all appearance of personal attack upon those, who profess that, upon grounds of reason and science, they cannot accept the Creed. I respectfully recognise the difficulty, which the scientific temperament and scientific habits of thought place in the way of the reception of super-scientific truths. It would gratify me to know that



some few persons of this class had honoured my book by a perusal; it seems more likely to gain such perusal in its actual form, than it would be if it bristled with argumentative references to contemporary writers. In certain fields I have not hesitated to break a lance: this book does not seem to me to be a suitable field.

Taking a more general view, I may acknowledge that I feel gratified by the manner in which some of my reviewers have connected my book with the great question of the apologetics of the future. I should be sorry that it should be regarded, in the technical sense of the term, as purely and simply apologetical. But a book bearing the title which this book bears manifestly cannot be divested of an apologetic character: the simplest believer who examines the grounds of his faith—and surely all ought to do this—does, so far as his examination goes, enter upon the field of apologetics: and in this sense every book, which is written with the intention of confirming the faith of believers, has the nature of an apology. I repeat, however, that I should be sorry that my book should be regarded solely in this character. I should like it to be read by many, who have no taste, and no feeling of need, for this class of literature. Nevertheless I am thankful to those who have examined the book specially from this point of view; and I shall consider it to be a great privilege, if I be adjudged by thoughtful men to have in any degree indicated to the younger generation the course which the apologetics of the future must take. Concerning the direction of that course I have in my own mind no doubt. It is that which was revealed by the Lord Himself, when He said, *I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* It is the characteristic of light to be its own evidence. We do not arm ourselves with a number of ingeniously constructed lamps or lanterns, in order to ascertain whether the sun is shining: in the presence of the sun all artificial light appears dark. And so the light which streams from Christ, and which as a matter of fact has illuminated the world as it was never illuminated before, would seem to be the best of proofs, that He, our Lord and Master,

is what the Catholic Church believes Him to be. I do not venture to say what might have been the best demonstration of Christian truth in primitive days, when the disciples of Christ had to contend with ancient superstitions and Jewish prejudices, and when they were compelled to confess that the cross of Christ which they preached was to some a stumbling-block and to others foolishness; but in this nineteenth century, when the triumph of the cross has been long achieved, and the difficulties of making men bow the knee at the Name of Jesus are of a quite different kind, I am persuaded that the wisest and best course is to point to Christ Himself, as the supreme revelation of God to man, the fulfilment of the desires of the aching heart of humanity, the realisation of our brightest dreams and our best-founded hopes.

A friendly reviewer has written, 'We scarcely like to say that the modern Pearson on the Creed has been written; but the task, after reading Bishop Goodwin, no longer seems impossible.'

To this kindly remark I reply, that I wish from the bottom of my heart that the task may be speedily and effectually performed. No one will rejoice more honestly than myself at the supersession of my book, by one which shall more completely accomplish that which I have endeavoured to do.

H. C.

ROSE CASTLE : *July 21, 1899.*

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NOTE.—References are made in this book to the following editions :

- Pearson on the Creed.* Oxford, 1832.  
*Barrow's Works.* Oxford, 1830.  
*Butler's Works.* Oxford, 1844.  
*Aids to Reflection.* Pickering, 1839.  
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

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*All things are possible to him that believeth*—ST. MARK ix. 23



## THE CREED

1. *I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of  
heaven and earth ;*
2. *And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord,*
3. *Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the  
Virgin Mary,*
4. *Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead,  
and buried,*
5. *He descended into hell ; The third day He rose  
again from the dead,*
6. *He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right  
hand of God the Father Almighty ;*
7. *From thence He shall come to judge the quick and  
the dead.*
8. *I believe in the Holy Ghost ;*
9. *The holy Catholic Church ; The Communion of  
Saints ;*
10. *The Forgiveness of sins ;*
11. *The Resurrection of the body,*
12. *And the life everlasting. Amen.*

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

THE Apostles' Creed<sup>1</sup> opens with the emphatic words I *BELIEVE*. *I believe in God the Father Almighty*. The phrase is repeated towards the close of the Creed—*I believe in the Holy Ghost*. And before each article which the Creed contains the same words, though not expressed, are to be understood. The Creed, taken in its completeness, is the collection of facts or truths or doctrines which a Christian man, or one who seeks to become a Christian through the sacrament of baptism, professes that, as having been baptized, or as a candidate for baptism, he accepts and holds—that is, which he *believes*.

It is manifestly necessary, therefore, to a proper appreciation of the Creed, and of the manner in which its adoption is to be regarded as pledging the mind and conscience and life of a Christian, that the meaning of the word *believe* should be examined and defined; the more so, because it cannot be

<sup>1</sup> There is no reason to believe that the Apostles' Creed represents a formula actually composed by the Apostles. 'Had this been the case,' as Dr. Heurtley observes, 'the various churches would scarcely have thought themselves at liberty to make alterations and additions to the extent to which they did. Much less is there warrant for the tradition mentioned by Rufinus, that each Apostle contributed a several article. (*Harmonia Symbolica*, p. 153.) The truth would seem to be that the original baptismal formula of belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, was naturally expanded and modified by the addition of the few more essential of Christian truths, and that this was done without any one absolute controlling authority, capable of producing complete uniformity. Consequently we have the same Creed substantially in early times throughout Christendom, with slight variations. It may be remembered that St. Paul speaks of a *pattern of sound words* (2 Tim. i. 13. R.V.), a phrase which seems to point to some kind of Creed, recognised by him, though it is impossible to say precisely what the pattern was,

denied that the word is not unfrequently used by different persons in senses importantly different one from another. As colours may vary in shade to such an extent that they seem to be diverse in everything but in name, so it may be, and sometimes is, with the meaning of words. We speak of the *blue* sky, and we also describe the colour produced by the dye of indigo under the same name of *blue*. No one complains that this should be so. Nevertheless, dark blue is one thing and light blue is another; there is no danger lest the two should be confounded; they may even be popularly described as two different colours, and no misapprehension need be feared. From one point of view dark blue and light blue are two different things; from another point of view they may be regarded as being the same.

Perhaps the shades of belief are not always so clearly recognised as the shades of colour. Yet they are quite as distinct, and doubtless much more important. Belief may vary from the pole of otiose acceptance of a proposition which it is scarcely worth while either to affirm or to deny, to the other pole of certain knowledge, and the apprehension of truth with the tenacity of a life and death struggle. A man meets another upon the road, and for good-fellowship's sake, and for want of anything better to say, he asserts that the weather is fine; to which the person addressed, being virtually challenged to express an opinion, replies that it is. Yet it is possible or even probable, that the two men who express a common creed with respect to the weather do not really agree in their belief; and it is quite certain that neither of them cares in the smallest degree whether they do or do not. They may easily differ as to how much was implied by the word *fine*; whether it was used merely to express the present fact that there was no rain at the time and place of uttering the word, or whether it was used in a more extended sense as implying the belief that the same kind of weather prevailed elsewhere, or was likely to prevail for some days to come. And thus apparent agreement may be real diversity; and in such a case as that cited it matters not if so it be. The weather is an open question.

On the other hand, two men may find it necessary to compare

notes upon some point of high interest to the country to which both belong; the point may be one of first-rate political and social importance, involving questions upon the answer to which may depend the happiness of millions; and it not unfrequently happens that upon such a point the creed of two men, presumably of equal ability, will differ widely. It matters not for the purpose which we have in hand to attempt to explain the possibility of such difference; it is sufficient to know that it frequently exists; and in such cases it is necessary to accept the fact that there are differences of creed upon which the most mighty political or national issues depend. The belief, however, which is possible to the human mind upon points, in which, from the nature of the case, only moral certainty is attainable, falls short of that which can be reached in the region of thought which deals with absolute knowledge. For example, a man who has studied geometry or pure mathematics believes many theorems concerning the properties of space and number, because he *knows* them to be true. Ordinary minds do not, in the proper sense of the term, *disbelieve* these theorems, they simply know nothing about them; the theorems are outside the sphere of knowledge and thought of such minds; consequently the question of belief or disbelief never arises. The moment that a mind understands a theorem in mathematics and can follow the reasoning which leads up to it, in that same moment the theorem is grasped and believed. It may be doubted, therefore, whether in this case the word *belief* can with strict propriety be used. In one sense it can, in another it cannot; it can be used, because it is absurd to say that a man does not believe that which he certainly knows to be true; and at the same time it may be argued that, just because there is no place left for doubt, therefore there is no opening for the exercise of belief properly so called. For it may be maintained, and maintained with strictest propriety, that the possibility of doubt, or even of denial, is essential to the existence of belief in the true sense of the term. It may be urged that to *know* is one thing, and that to *believe* is another; and that although we believe by the law of absolute necessity all that we know, we do not know in the fullest sense all that we believe; that in fact there are

more kinds of belief than one, belief extending from a mere practical persuasion that a thing is true, to absolute certainty that the thing must be true and cannot be otherwise.

The assertion that the possibility of *doubt* is essential to the existence of *belief* may be, perhaps, deemed open to objection. It must, however, be maintained; and as the assertion is one of great importance, lying at the root of the true conception of Christian faith, its meaning shall be explained and illustrated.

The point to be borne in mind is the difference between that kind of certainty which attaches to propositions of a demonstrative kind, such as mathematical theorems, and that belonging to truths which we know by moral intuition, or through the Holy Scriptures, or by similar means. For practical purposes the certainty may, to the mind of a given individual, be conceivably regarded as the same in the two cases; the difference will be that in the former doubt or denial is impossible, while in the latter there is no such impossibility.

Suppose the owner of a field wishes to prevent trespass. There are two courses which he may adopt. He may either put up a notice to say that the ground is private and that trespassers will be prosecuted; or he may build a high wall. One process may possibly be in practice as effectual as the other, but they are different in principle: when the wall is built, trespass is impossible, just as it is impossible to transgress a rule of geometry or mechanics; whereas when a notice is used, it is assumed that it can be set at nought, but it is trusted that good feeling and respect for law and fear of consequences will prevent this result. In the case of faith, and of that moral discipline which depends upon faith, there is no high wall which it is impossible to scale. Men can doubt and deny, if they please, without danger of being treated as insane.

When, therefore, it is asserted that the possibility of doubt is essential to the existence of belief, it is by no means intended to suggest that every believer is personally liable to be tormented with doubts concerning that which he believes; but it is asserted that the truths may be questioned, may even be denied, by those who wish, and that if this were not so the



truths concerned would be matters for demonstration, and not for belief, properly so called.

The distinction upon which stress has been here laid is of prime importance in the consideration of that which is described as religious belief. Some of the attacks which are made upon the Christian religion, and some of the difficulties which present themselves with painful force before not a few Christian minds, find their strength chiefly in the supposition, expressed or implied, that the belief, which a Christian soul professes, ought to be of that kind which is identical with knowledge or with mathematical certainty. It has been asserted, in fact, in so many words, that it is immoral to say that we believe in the case of matters to which we cannot apply the same kind of investigation as in scientific research. If this be so, religious belief and scientific belief are to be placed upon precisely the same footing. This can scarcely be; and it is difficult to understand what there can be of immoral in accepting as a ground of belief that which is essentially different from mathematical proof. St. Augustine wrote long ago that if we believe only what we see we can scarcely know who our parents were: and certainly there are abundant examples in daily practical life of believing, and acting upon belief, in cases which do not admit of scientific investigation. The Christian position then is not immoral; and a protest against the misunderstanding of it is involved in the key words of the Creeds of the Church, *I believe*. Not *I know*—however true it may be that in the case of saintly minds there may be a constant tendency to narrow the gap between knowledge and faith—but *I believe*. This spiritual action, which is possible, takes the place of another which is not possible, at all events completely or in the present life: ‘believing,’ as the great poet has it, ‘where we cannot prove.’

A similar, or the same, protest, is uttered by the phrase which describes the foundation of the Church emphatically as ‘the Catholic *Faith*.’ Of course, in a certain sense, that foundation must be knowledge as well; intelligent beings cannot put aside their reason and all that their reason demonstrates to them; they cannot inside the Church contradict

anything which they would acknowledge outside; reason is reason, and truth is truth, whether inside or outside the Church; nevertheless it is pre-eminently Christian Faith, not Christian Knowledge, upon which the Church rests. This is a plain matter of fact; I am not arguing whether it be wise or unwise, right or wrong, but only asserting that the Christian charter of incorporation has faith for its most important element, and that the charter cannot be understood if for the word *faith* we substitute the word *knowledge*.

This is the more carefully to be noted because the substitution of *knowledge* for *faith* would seem to be at the root of much of the difficulty, which is felt in modern times with regard to religious belief. The term *agnosticism*, with which we have become so familiar of late years, expresses (as it would seem) this position, namely, that the being and character of God cannot be *known*, and that therefore the whole subject of theology and all thoughts connected with God ought to be dismissed from the mind as belonging to an unknowable region. Now, I cannot afford to concede that God is unknowable in the sense that His being cannot be asserted upon ground of reason; I shall have to argue hereafter that the persuasion of the reality of His existence does rest upon such ground: but so far as the knowledge of God is understood to mean a complete and clear and absolute knowledge, I should not merely be prepared to concede that all men are agnostic, but should also assert that this is precisely the view of the case which is set forth by the Creed of the Christian Church. Why is it that we say, I believe, but because we cannot say, I know? What is the meaning of *seeing through a glass darkly*,<sup>1</sup> and looking forward to the time when we *shall know*? Why is the knowledge of God connected with life eternal, nay, why is it said by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself that it *is life eternal*,<sup>2</sup> unless it be intended to hint that the complete knowledge of God is beyond the powers and capacities of this present finite life? If we might only construe agnostic as implying the strong feeling on the part of the human heart of the need of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xvii. 3.

faith, it would be a useful word in the Christian vocabulary. It is the *apistic*, if such a word may be coined, rather than the *agnostic*, if we construe that word strictly, who finds himself outside the privileges of the Christian Creed.<sup>1</sup>

It may be further observed that in the successive stages of the development of the work of Christ in the world the existence of faith or belief, as the prime mover of the hearts of men in the direction in which Christ would move them, may be manifestly seen. Belief has ever been the mainspring of Christian thought and of Christian action; and that is why Christian thought and action have been so often and so grievously misunderstood. There are several stages of development in the history of Christian faith which are worthy of notice.

In the first place, it is obvious that, during our Lord's ministry on earth, personal faith in Himself was the bond by which disciples were bound to Him and to each other. To demonstrate this completely would be to quote a large portion of the Gospels. Let it be sufficient to give a few illustrations.

Take as an example the call of the earliest Apostles. There are several accounts given of this call: these differ in their circumstances as between one Apostle and another, and also as described by the several Evangelists; but the essence of them all may be said to be contained in the formula *Follow Me*, the command being accompanied by that other equally wonderful formula *They straightway left their nets and followed Him*.<sup>2</sup> If it were a merely human transaction, we should describe what took place by saying that it was a remarkable instance of the influence of one soul, the soul of a true leader of men, upon the souls of others, or perhaps that it was a remarkable instance of the propagation of enthusiasm; the most grudging critic must admit that it was as much as this. Regarding the history from

<sup>1</sup> I have let the word *apistic* stand, though I quite feel that it is not exactly the word that is needed. I have consulted several scholarly friends, as well as the Greek lexicon, in order to discover what is the word which will best express the impossibility of *believing*, in the same way that the term *agnostic* expresses the impossibility of *knowing*; but I have not been successful in discovering a word not open to objection.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. iv. 19, 20.

the Christian point of view, we are compelled to ask the admission of much more; but whichever ground we take, the lowest that the narrowest criticism can press as probable, or the highest that the Apostles themselves could assume, still we come to the same result, that it was personal faith in Jesus Christ Himself which attracted disciples to Him.

See this illustrated by the interview of the Lord with the woman of Samaria, as related by St. John. The interview was long and varied; the request for a little water to drink gave occasion for a reference to certain living water which the poor weary traveller said that He was able to give to those who asked Him. *If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.*<sup>1</sup> The great subject having been once opened is followed up: the aspect of the stranger becomes more and more impressive, as well as more and more mysterious, till at last the woman stumbles, as it were, on the thought of Messiah; *I know*, she says, *that when Messiah cometh, He will tell us all things;*<sup>2</sup> and then comes the lightning flash, *I that speak unto thee am He.*<sup>3</sup>

A similar illustration may be found in the story of the blind man who was healed on washing, at the command of Christ, in the pool of Siloam, as narrated by the same Evangelist. Jesus finds this man, after he had suffered persecution and excommunication for His sake. He opens the conversation with the great question, *Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*<sup>4</sup> to which the answer is simple and natural enough, *Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?*<sup>5</sup> Jesus answers, *Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee;*<sup>6</sup> after which we are not surprised to have the confession, *Lord, I believe;* and the result of the confession of belief was that *he worshipped Him.*<sup>7</sup> The question it may be observed, in this and similar cases, is not whether the evidence of the claims of Jesus of Nazareth was sufficient, nor whether the persons who accepted it were wise or unwise, but simply what was the nature of the process by which the Lord won His disciples; and the answer is clear and past

<sup>1</sup> St. John iv. 10.<sup>2</sup> St. John iv. 25.<sup>3</sup> St. John iv. 26.<sup>4</sup> St. John ix. 35. <sup>5</sup> St. John ix. 36. <sup>6</sup> St. John ix. 37. <sup>7</sup> St. John ix. 38.



all power of contradiction, namely, that it was by inspiring personal trust in Himself. The creed was imperfect in those early days; it was imperfect notwithstanding that Peter could say, *We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God*; <sup>1</sup> still there was a creed, and it was a living one; and they who were disciples in those days, equally with those who have in their hands the settled creed of the Catholic Church, would say *I believe in Jesus Christ*, and would allege this belief as the ground of their discipleship.

The same fact manifests itself, even with increased brightness, in the Epistles which supply so important a part of early Christian literature. Those Epistles may be regarded in a certain sense as religious treatises; they may with great propriety be so described; but they are religious treatises of a peculiar kind, as tending throughout, sometimes directly, and sometimes indirectly, to establish the personal claims of Jesus Christ the crucified to the allegiance and love of mankind. Take as a test case the Epistle which is least like an epistle, and most like a formal treatise, I mean the Epistle to the Hebrews. The evidence which this document supplies is all the more weighty if, according to the most accepted opinion of critics, it be not from the pen of St. Paul; more weighty, because more likely to be free from the bias given to St. Paul's mind by the remarkable circumstances connected with his own conversion to Christ; but whoever may have been the author, the main design of the Epistle is clearly this, namely, to represent the Lord Jesus as the object of faith to those who had been educated in the Jewish school, and prepared by the medium of the sacrifices and ceremonial of the Law to look for a more perfect dispensation. In fact, the whole principle and teaching of the Epistle are concentrated in its opening words: *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.* <sup>2</sup> To find forecasts and prophetic indications of this Son in all that preceded His birth, to shew that all was leading up to Him and preparing for Him, that His Advent was

<sup>1</sup> St. John vi. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. i. 1.



the fulfilment of the promises and purposes of God, and that therefore it was the duty of Hebrews to receive Him as the *consolation of Israel*<sup>1</sup> and the fulfilment of all their hopes—this is the beginning and middle and end of the Epistle. There is another element in it, namely, that of practical exhortation to stand firm in the faith which those to whom it was written had adopted, and not to be frightened from their steadfastness by any fiery trial of persecution; but the presence of this element only gives strength and life to the general argument: the faith which is recommended is to be of that personal living kind which can resist persecution; the persecuted ones are exhorted not merely to examine and see how perfectly the Jesus whom they had promised to serve corresponded to Hebrew hopes, but also to look to Him as a living Master and Lord who had Himself passed through persecution and endured a cruel death for the truth's sake, and who now sat at the end of the course to receive and crown those who ran the race well. *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*<sup>2</sup>

Once more, if we look to Church history we find the same truth put in evidence, namely, that belief in Jesus Christ is the ground of life both to the individual believer and to the Church at large. In fact, the very name 'believers' seems to imply as much as is here asserted. Let it be noted how this word is used as a distinct and recognised title in the New Testament. Thus we read that *believers were the more added to the Lord*;<sup>3</sup> and again, St. Paul writes: *Be thou an example of the believers.*<sup>4</sup> So with regard to the verb *believe*, we find such phrases as these. *It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*<sup>5</sup> *Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*<sup>6</sup> *What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*<sup>7</sup> Believing is thus treated as an absolute act, by doing which a man becomes a disciple, and inherits the promises. Again, in some places believing in Christ is more distinctly specified; as when St. John writes:

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke ii. 25.<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 2.<sup>3</sup> Acts v. 14.<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 12.<sup>5</sup> Rom. i. 16.<sup>6</sup> Rom. x. 4.<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 15.

*Whoso believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,*<sup>1</sup> and *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.*<sup>2</sup> So the Lord said to Thomas, *Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*<sup>3</sup> And the last of the Evangelists gives a general account of the reasons which led him to write his Gospel in these words: *Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.*<sup>4</sup> It is unnecessary to add examples. Many might easily be adduced, but they could scarcely make more clear the point in question, namely, that in primitive times belief in Jesus Christ was the foundation of membership in the Christian Church.

Nor is there any difference in principle, though there may be differences of another kind, as we move down the stream of Church history. The intense care manifested by the leaders of thought in the Christian Church during the early centuries in favour of a uniform declaration of the true faith, the struggles for orthodoxy, the fiery fights against Arianism, culminating in the publication of the Creed of Nicæa, all testify to the importance attached in those days to a living belief in Christ. It is easy, with the assurance of modern self-conceit and self-satisfaction, to deride the fact of a great religious body, like the Christian Church, divided into two parties, contending with each other to the death for an iota; and it is equally easy to reply, as indeed the most contemptuous enemies of the Church have admitted, that a single letter may conceivably, even in ordinary worldly matters, be of immense importance: *god* and *good* differ only by a vowel, yet there is an infinite difference between asserting a man to be *good*, and asserting him to be *god*. But the point upon which it is chiefly intended to lay stress is this, that even if the contests of the early centuries were sometimes unreasonable, and even if the zeal for orthodoxy did sometimes stand in the

<sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 1.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xx. 29.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John v. 10.

<sup>4</sup> St. John xx. 30, 31.

way of better things, nevertheless the very existence and the intense heat of the contest testify to the deep conviction of Christians, that their life depended upon belief in Jesus Christ. And so when the fire and heat of controversy had passed away, there came out of the furnace a most priceless possession to mankind, a monument destined to last for evermore, in the form of a well-considered and solemnly attested Christian Creed. And it should be added that, ever since the primitive days until now, the profession of belief has formed not only the test of fitness to enter the Church, but also a distinct portion of the Church's worship. Let this point be carefully noted. It might strike a person not familiar with the order of the Church service as a strange thing, that the recitation of a creed should form so prominent a part; it has been sometimes objected to the service as a fault that so it should be; but it may be safely alleged that they who have most entered into the spirit of worship and of the creeds will best understand their entire harmony, and why one has been blended with the other. A declaration of personal trust and allegiance is in reality a high form of worship; to recite a creed is no barren and dry test of orthodoxy; it is a loving outburst of a loyal heart, and a claim to receive the blessing promised to members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of heaven. And it may be well to notice that a special emphasis is given to this declaration of personal trust by the use of the singular pronoun—not *we* believe, but—*I* believe. There is scarcely any other instance of the use of the singular pronoun in public service. The worship of the Church is that of a united body. Even Confession is made in the plural number. Jesus Christ our Lord taught us to say *Our* Father. Hence the solemn repetition of a Creed is an act of loyalty on the part of each individual soul. The well-instructed Christian will on no account part with creeds as portions of public worship.

This point is of so much importance, and yet is so often unnoticed or misapprehended, that it may be well to lay a little more stress upon it.

Be it observed, then, that creeds are hymns or acts of worship

and praise, and that conversely hymns and anthems may be generally regarded as forms of creed. One of the three creeds of the Church is professedly a hymn, being known as the hymn *Quicumque Vult*; and it has been truly said that in order to appreciate its force and beauty it should be regarded, not as a thesis for theological controversy, but as an anthem to be chanted from side to side by worshippers in the choir of a church. But take the other two Creeds, which are not antiphonal in form, and observe that each may be regarded as an amplification of the *Gloria Patri*. 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,' may be described as the skeleton either of the Apostles' or of the Nicene Creed. Or examine the great Christian hymn *Te Deum laudamus*, and it will be found that the chief dogmas of the Christian faith are embodied, or rather embedded, in it and compose its very substance. Heaven and earth are represented as joining with those who sing the hymn in acknowledging 'The Father of an infinite Majesty, the honourable, true, and only Son, also the Holy Ghost the Comforter.' This recognition of the glory of the Triune God is the heart and centre of the hymn; and no professed creed could assert more clearly than does this hymn, those mysterious facts in the history of Christ, the Virgin birth, the precious death, the resurrection and ascension, and the session at the right hand of God, which form the most salient portions of the Church's Creed; in fact, 'the hymn, called *Te Deum laudamus*,' is a creed and nothing else, and it may be said that if the Apostles' Creed were lost, almost every article would be recoverable from this hymn. Nearly the same thing may be said concerning that other great hymn, the *Gloria in Excelsis*. 'We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, *God the Father Almighty*. O Lord, the *only begotten Son Jesus Christ*; O Lord God, Lamb of God, *Son of the Father*, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. . . . Thou that *sittest at the right hand of God the Father*, have mercy upon us. For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord, Thou only, O Christ, *with the Holy Ghost*, art most high in the glory of God the Father.' Who will venture



to say that this hymn of prayer and praise is not also in every sense a creed?

The same thing may be asserted concerning those metrical hymns, ancient and modern, of which we have so many—a mixture of good and bad. Perhaps it may be held that those are best which are most like creeds; that is, which contain a pointed expression of the faith which ought to animate them. Even outside the limits of theology we find something analogous; and it may be truly said that the national anthem or hymn, ‘God save the Queen,’ is the loyal Englishman’s creed, and is a living thing because it is so.

After all, the true notion of belief, as in its fullest and best form coincident with worship and praise, is perhaps nowhere more simply and more eloquently expressed than in the language of the Church Catechism. The duty of the child towards God is declared to be, ‘to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him, with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength; to worship Him, to give Him thanks, to put my whole trust in Him, to call upon Him, to honour His holy Name and His Word, and to serve Him truly all the days of my life.’ A grand development of the words *I believe*.

Let me now speak more particularly concerning belief as distinguished from other operations of the human mind, such as guessing, opining, knowing. I will introduce what I have to offer upon this subject with some weighty words of Bishop Pearson. Having defined belief in general to be ‘an assent to that which is credible, as credible,’ Bishop Pearson writes thus:

Now that is properly credible, which is not apparent of itself, nor certainly to be collected, either antecedently by its cause, or reversely by its effect, and yet, though by none of these ways, hath the attestation of a truth. For those things which are apparent of themselves, are either so in respect of our sense, as that snow is white, and fire is hot; or in respect of our understanding, as that the whole of everything is greater than any one part of the whole, that everything imaginable either is, or is not. The first kind of which being propounded to our sense, one to the sight, the other to the touch, appear of themselves immediately true, and are therefore not termed



credible, but evident to sense ; as the latter kind, propounded to the understanding, are immediately embraced and acknowledged as truths apparent in themselves, and are therefore not called credible, but evident to the understanding. And so these things which are apparent, are not said properly to be believed, but to be known.

Again, other things, though not immediately apparent in themselves, may yet appear most certain and evidently true, by an immediate and necessary connection with some thing formerly known. For, being every natural cause actually applied doth necessarily produce its own natural effect, and every natural effect wholly dependeth upon, and absolutely presupposeth its own proper cause ; therefore there must be an immediate connection between the cause and its effect. From whence it follows, that, if the condition be once clearly perceived, the effect will be known by the cause, and the cause by the effect. And by these ways, proceeding from principles evidently known by consequences certainly concluding, we come to the knowledge of propositions in mathematics, and conclusions in other sciences ; which propositions and conclusions are not said to be credible, but scientific ; and the comprehension of them is not Faith but Science.

Besides some things there are, which, though not evident of themselves, nor seen by any necessary connection to their causes or effects, notwithstanding appear to most as true as some external relations to other truths ; but yet so, as the appearing truth still leaves a possibility of falsehood with it, and therefore doth but incline to an Assent. In which case, whatsoever is thus apprehended, if it depend upon real arguments, is not yet called credible, but probable ; and an Assent to such a truth is not properly Faith, but Opinion.

But when anything propounded to us is neither apparent to our sense, nor evident to our understanding, in and of itself, neither certainly to be collected from any clear and necessary connection with the cause from which it proceedeth, and the effects which it naturally produceth, nor is taken up upon any real arguments, or reference to other acknowledged truths, and yet notwithstanding appeareth to us true, not by a manifestation but by attestation of the truth, and so moveth us to assent not of itself, but by virtue of the testimony given to it ; this is said properly to be credible ; and an Assent unto this, upon such credibility, is in the proper notion Faith or Belief.<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen that the description of belief as here given by Bishop Pearson is of a perfectly general kind ; that is to

<sup>1</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. i. p. 4.

say, it is applicable to belief in its most ordinary form as well as in that highest form which belongs to what we call the Christian Faith. The passage is all the more valuable on this account, because, having grasped the notion that there is in ordinary secular matters a plain distinction between belief and opinion, as also between belief and knowledge, we shall be the less likely to make confusion between different kinds of assent when we pass into the region of religious thought. It may perhaps be said that belief occupies a place intermediate between opinion and knowledge, and that as the grounds of belief are strengthened it tends to progress from the former towards the latter, the latter being what mathematicians would call the *limit* to which it ever tends. Even in science we may note something analogous to this progression. Take the great example of universal gravitation. Assuming the truth of the story of Newton and the falling apple, it may be said that the theory of universal gravitation then first formed itself in Newton's mind as an embryo *opinion*; his numerical verification by comparison of the distance passed through in a second by a falling body, with the motion of the moon towards the earth, increased this opinion to *belief*; this belief would be strengthened by his success in forming a lunar theory and by his mathematical explanation of Kepler's laws; and, finally, the constant progress of astronomical science, and the reiterated verifications afforded by observation of the planets and of comets, have made the theory of universal gravitation so sure, that it is difficult or impossible for any one who understands the evidence to disbelieve the theory; so that in this palmary instance belief has attained as nearly as is conceivable to the superior limit of *knowledge*.

It is a great advantage when a moral subject can be illustrated by something of a kindred nature in the department of science, and therefore I have introduced the preceding reference to the belief which intelligent minds have in universal gravitation. But it will be remembered, that there must of necessity be a great gap between any such illustration, and that kind of belief with which we are concerned in the region of religious thought. The paradoxical, but suggestive, words

of Tertullian, *Credo quia impossibile*, express the existence of this gap perhaps more emphatically than any other words which have been written.<sup>1</sup> There are regions of thought into which the human mind can carry its measuring line and its calculus, and can test and prove, and construct its theories, to be verified or disproved by subsequent examination; and there are regions in which it finds its methods inapplicable, and its best powers mere impotence. This is true even without passing into the sphere of Divine things: it is true whenever we enter upon those regions of thought which involve the infinite; it is true if we try to conceive what time and space actually are; it is true if we endeavour to answer the question, What is life? In reality the departments of thought, in which the human mind can expatiate without being in danger of losing itself, are very limited indeed. When we pass into the sphere of Divine things the impotence (or rather the limitation of the powers) of the human mind becomes conspicuous; and the attempt *by searching to find out God*<sup>2</sup> is intellectually as hopeless now as it was in the days of Job.

Consequently we need not be surprised, if in a formula which deals in any manner with God and His doings we find a form of belief, which shall be more than mere opinion but less than absolute knowledge, playing an important part. With regard, however, to the Apostles' Creed, which (though unable to claim Apostolic origin) is chiefly employed in setting forth that which the Apostles believed and laboured to propagate and publish concerning their Lord, there is this special point to be borne in mind, namely, that it professedly deals with a supernatural story. Anyone who adopts the principle that the supernatural is simply impossible, and therefore in-

<sup>1</sup> In the treatise *De Baptismo*, Tertullian writes, 'Is it not wonderful that death should be washed away by a mere bath? Yea, but if, because it is wonderful, it be therefore not believed, it ought on that account the rather to be believed.' To which the editor of the *Library of the Fathers* appends the following note: 'Such is, doubtless, the meaning of the saying, *Credo quia impossibile est*, i.e. with man, and in man's sight, and to man's reason. Tertullian speaks, just below, of *impossibilia*, as the materials of the Divine working.'

<sup>2</sup> Job xi. 7.

credible, cannot repeat the Apostles' Creed. Something will have to be said on the subject of the evidence, upon which the several supernatural events alleged in the Creed as part of our Lord's history are regarded as resting, when we come in due course to the consideration of the articles in which those events are rehearsed: for the present it may be sufficient to offer a few remarks on the general question of belief in the supernatural.

In the first place it may be urged, that absolute proof of the impossibility of events transcending the ordinary course of nature is manifestly out of the question. No amount of uniformity in a course of events can make it impossible, though it may make it highly improbable, that the uniformity never has been and never will be in any case broken through. All that we can say is, that as long as the causes at work at any given time remain the same the effects will remain the same; we cannot assert that no new causes will ever operate: neither can we assert that no causes ever have operated, other than those which are in operation now. Consequently the possibility of believing any alleged fact, which transcends ordinary experience, depends upon the amount and the kind of evidence which can be brought to support the allegation, and (it may be added) upon the kind of fact alleged. We cannot fairly take a fact out of its surroundings, and discuss the abstract question whether it be or be not credible. A fact may be in such manner bound up with others, the issues connected with the denial of it may be so important, and the witness brought in its support so solemn, that there may be more difficulty (so to speak) in rejecting than in accepting it. Let it be remembered that the question is not one of mathematical proof leading to exact knowledge; in such case the considerations, to which reference has just been made, altogether vanish; mathematical proof is mathematical proof; the thing proved is true, and there is an end of the matter. But the question with which we are dealing is one of credibility; and we cannot speak of the credible without admitting the possibility of doubt, and without acknowledging the impossibility of mathematical proof. If I should be told as a matter of ordinary news that a man who was buried last week had risen



alive from the grave, I should simply disbelieve the report and think no more about it: but when I find the story of a resurrection set in all the circumstances which surround the resurrection of Jesus Christ, when I note what is its meaning and what are alleged to have been its consequences, when I take this event in the Lord's history in connection with what went before and what followed, and when I observe how the spiritual life of the world has subsequently depended very much upon the reception of the resurrection as a fact, then I feel that I need not disbelieve it on the ground that it is obviously an idle tale, and that I am not giving up my claim to be regarded as a rational being if I accept the truth of this event, albeit confessedly transcending the ordinary rules of human history.

Thus much it seemed well to say in the very opening of this book on the general question of credibility; because it is useless to discuss the grounds and meaning and force of a creed, if it be assumed upon *a priori* grounds that the contents of the same are essentially and in their very nature incredible. I would aver with respect to the creed of Christendom as represented by the Apostles' Creed, that, though it may contain things which cannot be *proved* in the strictest sense of the term, it contains nothing which cannot be *believed*; and I think I am not wrong in saying, that it must be profitable for all persons, and essential to divines, to consider carefully what the foundations are upon which it rests, so as to be able to answer, not only the question, What things do Christians believe? but also this other and perhaps equally important question, Why do they believe these things?

Now it will be found that there are three distinct foundations, upon which the articles of the Christian Creed rest. These may be described as Reason, History, and Faith.

Properly speaking, it may be said that in repeating the Creed we are by the nature of the case, and by the very force of the term used, in the region of faith, and that faith is of necessity the ground of the Creed. It will be obvious, however, that all the articles need not, and a little consideration will shew that they do not, rest wholly upon the same foundation.



A scientific treatise may be based partly upon observation, partly upon recognised facts, and partly upon mathematical reasoning and deduction. Some chapters in the treatise may rest exclusively upon one or another of these foundations, and some upon two or three combined. The treatise will none the less be essentially mathematical, because some of its chapters do not contain mathematical reasoning; and in like manner the Apostles' Creed, though resting as regards some important articles upon Faith, may also in respect of other articles rest upon Reason, in respect of others upon History, or upon some combination of the three foundations specified.<sup>1</sup>

To examine the foundations upon which each article rests, and so (if it may be) to illustrate the several articles, and to assist the reader in an intelligent apprehension of their meaning and credibility, is the purpose of the following chapters. May it be permitted to the writer to say how much he feels the difficulty and responsibility of the task which he has imposed upon himself, and how earnestly he desires that his book may prove useful to some of those who read it?

For the present let it be sufficient to explain the principle upon which the book will proceed by three simple examples.

<sup>1</sup> Several critics of the first edition of this work urged that I ought to define more accurately the meaning of Faith, regarded as one of the foundations of the Christian Creed. In general I may say that I desire, as nearly as possible, to adhere to the definition or explanation which I have quoted from Bishop Pearson. The difference between the application made by Pearson and that suggested by myself is this, that Bishop Pearson confines himself in the main to Scripture proof, whereas I have taken a wider view. So far as the testimony afforded by Holy Scripture is concerned, Pearson's great work is probably exhaustive; but it has been my purpose to show that, beyond the question of Scripture proof, arguments may be alleged for the wisdom and propriety of believing truths which cannot be completely established upon the ground either of Reason or of History. Bishop Pearson, in summing up at the conclusion of each article, speaks of the 'infallible truth' which it contains; he means that he has proved the article on the ground of Holy Scripture, and that as Holy Scripture is infallible, so is his interpretation of the article. My purpose is rather to show that articles which cannot be absolutely proved on the ground of reason or history may nevertheless be accepted without any slur upon the wisdom or intellect of him who receives them. It is not so much faith in this authority or that to which reference is made, as faith regarded as reasonable belief, where absolute proof cannot be had. See, however, what is said concerning the nature and meaning of faith upon p. 25.

The articles to which reference is made will be more fully dealt with in their proper places.

The Creed opens with the expression of belief in God, the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth. For this fundamental tenet we can appeal only to the reason of man. History may illustrate God's doings; Faith may help us to understand His character; but with regard to the ultimate question, whether there is a God, and whether He created the universe, we can find an answer in no other region than that of the human mind itself.

Again, one of the articles of the Creed asserts that Jesus Christ was crucified. Concerning this fact, taken by itself, there can be no doubt whatever. The most sceptical person, the most absolute unbeliever, cannot fail to accept it as the truth. Why such a painful and even shameful incident should be enshrined in the solemn language of a Catholic Creed is a question of a different kind, which leads to many other questions and also to the most important conclusions; but the crucifixion taken by itself is a simple fact of history.

Lastly, the concluding article of the Creed expresses belief in the Life Everlasting. In rehearsing this article we must feel that reason affords a very faint light, and that history from the nature of the case utterly fails us. We soar into a quite transcendental region into which faith can be our only guide. Whether it is a safe and sure guide is not now before us: the assertion made is that no other guide can be imagined; we may argue that our belief is reasonable, and opponents may argue that it is unreasonable, but anyhow, belief it must be—faith, not sight, not proof.

These three examples, which have been intentionally introduced with the utmost brevity, as not desiring to anticipate fuller treatment hereafter, will shew distinctly that there are at least those three foundations underlying the Apostles' Creed to which reference has been made. Reason; History; Faith. Is it wrong to say, that the condition of the Creed, as resting upon three supports, is more stable than it would be if all depended upon one, however strong that one support might be? In mechanics one support may be firm, but the equilibrium

is unstable. It is still unstable with two: three are necessary to ensure stability. May not something of the same kind be true in moral and religious things?

I subjoin a table exhibiting the view, which I have been led to take, of the relation of the several Articles of the Creed to these three foundations, which, for convenience' sake, I shall denote by the capital letters R., H., and F.

Where two or more letters are appended, the meaning is that the article is to be regarded as resting partly on one foundation and partly on another. It will be perceived that in fact there are very few articles to which only one letter is assigned.

*Table to illustrate the triple foundation of the  
Apostles' Creed.*

|                                                                                                       |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| I. I believe in God the Father Almighty,<br>Maker of Heaven and Earth . . . . .                       | R., F.     |
| II. And in Jesus Christ His only Son our<br>Lord . . . . .                                            | H., F.     |
| III. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,<br>born of the Virgin Mary . . . . .                        | H., F.     |
| IV. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was cruci-<br>fied, dead, and buried . . . . .                     | H.         |
| V. He descended into Hell; the third day<br>He rose again from the dead . . . . .                     | H., F.     |
| VI. He ascended into Heaven; and sitteth<br>on the right hand of God the Father<br>Almighty . . . . . | H., F.     |
| VII. From thence He shall come to judge the<br>quick and the dead . . . . .                           | F.         |
| VIII. I believe in the Holy Ghost . . . . .                                                           | H., F., R. |
| IX. The Holy Catholic Church; the Com-<br>munion of Saints . . . . .                                  | H., F.     |
| X. The forgiveness of sins . . . . .                                                                  | R., F.     |
| XI. The resurrection of the body . . . . .                                                            | R., F.     |
| XII. And the Life Everlasting . . . . .                                                               | R., F.     |

Let me commend this scheme to the reader's attention as at present tentative and on its trial; but I venture to hope that I shall, upon the whole, be able to substantiate it, and that the examination of the Apostles' Creed under its guidance may be found profitable. Certainly the examination of the Creed in an earnest, honest, and solemn spirit can scarcely be without advantage. And even if the present writer should fail, as he knows that to some extent he will and must, to do justice to his great subject, still he is confident that the general line of thought to which he invites the reader is one which it is wise to pursue, specially in these days of inquiry and of doubt, in which the lot of the writer as well as of the reader has in God's providence been cast.

For the sake of additional clearness some remarks shall be here inserted with reference to the use of the term *faith* in this chapter, and indeed throughout this volume. There is a difficulty in using the word with precision, arising partly from the fact that it is not, and cannot be, always interpreted in identically the same sense. Three uses of the term *faith* may be specified.

In the first place it may be used objectively, as standing for the collective body of those truths which Christians believe. Thus St. Paul speaks of *preaching the faith which once he destroyed*.<sup>1</sup> Again we read that Felix heard Paul *concerning the faith in Christ*.<sup>2</sup> So in modern days we talk of 'planting the faith,' in some new land, of men 'dying for the faith,' and so forth. In like manner the followers of Mahomet claim to possess 'the faith,' and to be themselves emphatically 'the faithful.' In this sense the Creed is said to contain 'the articles of the Christian faith.' There can be no ambiguity when the word is used thus: it may be a question whether any particular doctrine is a genuine portion of the faith, but there can be no doubt whatever as to the signification of the word.

Secondly, the word *faith* may be used purely subjectively;

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxiv. 24.

that is, as expressing that action of the mind by which it believes in a person or in a truth. Thus our Lord speaks of having *faith as a grain of mustard seed*,<sup>1</sup> and of such faith being able to move mountains. This is a use of the word not confined to holy things: it belongs to common speech; as when we speak of having faith in a man's character, or faith in some great principle.

But, thirdly, the word may be applied to that kind of belief which is described by Bishop Pearson in the quotation given in a previous part of this chapter. It is the assent to a thing as credible upon grounds which appear to the mind to be adequate, but which yet do not amount to the supply of positive proof. These grounds may be of very varied kinds, and they may seem adequate to one mind, and not to another; the possibility of regarding them as *adequate* may depend in many instances upon moral conditions, and so the rejection of truth may involve moral culpability; and to take the extreme case, one person may feel sure of the truth of an alleged fact or doctrine and may hang his hopes of happiness upon his conviction, while another seriously doubts, and a third flatly denies, the fact or doctrine in question. Faith, therefore, may be taken to express the acceptance of a proposition on grounds which do not carry demonstration, but which are regarded by the recipient mind as *adequate*, it being quite admitted that the word *adequate* is ambiguous and may mean different things to different minds. If there did not exist an ambiguity of this kind, there would be no question of accepting or not accepting Christian doctrine.

It is perhaps scarcely necessary, but it cannot be out of place, to refer to the remarkable homily on faith, preached in the Epistle to the Hebrews upon the text, *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*; <sup>2</sup> or, according to the Revised Version, *the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen*. Here we have *faith* brought into clear connection with *proof*, and one alleged to be equivalent to the other. The equivalence is real and substantial;

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvii, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi, 1.



only we must understand by *proving*, not a process which can be performed by the head of the mathematician, so much as that which can be done by the heart and soul of the hero in the cause of God. The catalogue of men of faith given in this Epistle, and the examination of the course of conduct which has entitled each to a place in that catalogue, contain, perhaps, the best teaching that can be found concerning the nature and meaning of faith.

Before bringing this introductory chapter to a close, the reader's attention may with advantage be directed to two questions:

I. Is there any means or process, whereby it is possible to arrive at absolute certainty concerning matters of religious belief? and

II. Is it necessary, or in what sense is it necessary, that this condition of mental certainty should be attained?

I. It seems to be generally admitted that the attainment of certainty in religious matters cannot be effected by any ordinary process of stern, intellectual reasoning, whether deductive or inductive. There may be, and doubtless there are, points lying within the circle of religious belief, which may be regarded as self-evident to every clear intellect and which are capable of such proof as every clear intellect will accept. That to tell truth is a virtue, and to tell lies a vice, is either self-evident or susceptible of such simple and plain proof, that to contradict the proposition may be rightly regarded as irrational, in the same degree, though not in the same way, as the denial of the axioms of geometry and physics. But there is manifestly much within the circle of religious belief to which this kind of remark does not apply; and if certainty is claimed by believers it will be not on the ground of pure ratiocination, but upon some other. One of the claims made by John Wesley and regarded by him as of prime importance, as it has been by his followers and by some who would not so class themselves, was that of possessing a personal assurance of acceptance with God; and the doctrine of *assurance* is recognised as one of those which distinguishes a certain school of Christian believers. Persons holding this

doctrine, by the very force of the term used to express it, lay claim to certainty upon a most important point; but they do so, not on the ground of any distinct reasoning, which they can submit for examination, but as the result of an inward feeling, which is evidence to themselves and in the nature of things cannot be evidence to others. It is subjective assurance, not assurance resting upon objective grounds. The effect produced upon the temper and tone and conduct of persons holding it may conceivably be so striking, and so practically eloquent, as to become infectious and to generate a similar persuasion of assurance in other souls; but this is a quite different process from that of offering evidence to the reasoning faculties. In fact, persons who thus claim assurance or certainty of acceptance with God appeal to that which they describe as their *experience*, and not to their reason.

This being so, we cannot be surprised if we find that the power of asserting an unvarying assurance in religious matters is to a great extent dependent upon temperament, and even in the same person will much change in degree from time to time and with the circumstances in which the person is placed. Many modern biographies and diaries illustrate this truth, and it was anticipated long ago by John Bunyan. The hero of the 'Pilgrim's Progress' loses the burden of his sins and attains an immediate sense of assurance at the foot of the Cross: but he subsequently has to pass 'Doubting Castle,' the residence of Giant Despair, and he has a tremendous struggle with Apollyon in the 'Valley of the Shadow of Death.' But be the assurance of a Christian soul with regard to its own acceptance with God what it may, it is something different in kind from the intellectual conviction of truth resulting from a course of reasoning, which other persons can examine and upon the validity of which they can pass an opinion. It is something internal, impalpable, personal.

A testimony to the desire which many souls feel for such certainty is to be found in the remarkable fact of the possibility of accepting Papal Infallibility. It is undoubtedly illogical to rest upon this ground, because there must be antecedently to its acceptance a judgment passed in its favour, and a determination

on the part of the inquirer's mind to accept it; and this judgment, this determination, upon which the acceptance of the infallible authority rests, manifestly cannot itself be supported by that supposed infallibility.<sup>1</sup> No doubt, when the step of submission has once been taken, all doubt and trouble may be regarded as having come to an end: whether the subsequent calm is of a kind which an intelligent mind ought to crave, or whether it be not rather comparable to that bodily condition which results from anodyne drugs, need not be discussed here: whatever be the truth with regard to this matter, it is absolutely true and undeniable that to rest upon the Pope as infallible, according to the claim openly made on his behalf, requires a previous examination of the ground upon which the claim to infallibility rests, and the voluntary yielding of mental assent to the validity of that claim.

A similar remark applies to the theory which would claim for the Church in its corporate capacity that infallibility which the Vatican Council has arrogated for the Pope. There is indeed an innocent and useful sense in which this kind of infallibility may be conceded: that is to say, it may be fairly argued, that, on the strength of the promise that the Holy Ghost shall always be with the Church of Christ and shall guide it into all truth, Christians may reasonably believe that any declaration of doctrine, which can rightly claim to be the expression of the mind of the Church, may be safely accepted as the utterance of the Holy Ghost, and therefore true. Certainly it must be conceded that any person is to be regarded as exceedingly rash, who would set up any opinion of his own in opposition to a determination of doctrine so made. In this way, the Creeds of the Church and the decrees of the early General Councils may claim very high authority. But after all, a man cannot divest himself of the responsibility of satisfying himself as to the ground upon which the Church itself rests, and the ground upon which certain utterances are claimed to be the veritable utterances of the Church. The Church may be the pillar and ground of the truth, but each

<sup>1</sup> See the whole subject fully discussed in Dr. Salmon's *Infallibility of the Church*.

man must at least satisfy himself what the Church is, and what are its utterances.

Nor is the responsibility of inquiry and of forming conclusions avoided by saying, that we take our stand upon Holy Scripture as the infallible word of God. Here again it may be granted that perfect peace will be found when the Bible has been accepted as an infallible guide; but the infallibility of the book cannot, in the nature of things, be guaranteed by anything within the book, the infallibility of which is the very question which is at issue. There may be much in its tone, in its historical circumstances and the like, which may make it comparatively easy to a large number of minds to assume that it is and was intended to be an infallible guide: but it is absolutely certain that the infallibility cannot be accepted as a proposition logically proved, unless the grounds of the proof lie outside the book concerning whose authority the argument takes place.

Hence it may be concluded that no allegation of infallible guidance can render unnecessary a personal judgment by each mind as to the validity of the claim to infallibility which is set up on behalf of any guide, whatever or whoever that guide may be.

Nevertheless it is quite clear that a large number of persons do regard themselves as resting with perfect security upon their religious belief: they rest upon the Scriptures, or upon the Church, or upon Papal Infallibility, with entire confidence and complete peace, without observing in all probability that the assurance of the strength of their foundation must ultimately depend upon an act of their own judgment and the wisdom of their own choice. Hence we come round again to the original question, whether there is any special means or process whereby certainty in religious belief can be obtained.

The answer would seem to be, that the religious faculty is specially human, and in a certain sense and degree is given to all men. The affinity of soul between man and God is that which above all other things gives man his dignity. Hence, when Divine truth is put before the human soul there is an instinct of apprehension called into activity: this activity may



be more or less developed in different individuals, according to difference of gifts, education, circumstances: it may vary from extreme sluggishness almost like death, to the highest energy of spiritual life: but, speaking of men as a race, the religious faculty would seem to be as much a distinctive feature as the gift of reason or the power of speech. And as with other human instincts—art, poetry, mathematics—there are certain great men endowed with extraordinary gifts who lay down laws and develop principles, and illuminate their brethren with the Divine light that is in them, so it may be asserted that it is with the religious faculty: divinely inspired men supply a light to their brethren which they have not in themselves: they communicate to their weaker brethren the strength of their own convictions. An Apostle can say, *I know whom I have believed*,<sup>1</sup> and his faith and knowledge become by a process of spiritual influence the property of the weak, and of those who need guidance.

Moreover, intellectual assurance concerning religious truth is so closely connected with holiness of life, that if it should be thought that some men have a special faculty of belief, it might be urged that it would perhaps be more true to say that they have a special faculty of holiness. At all events it is true, that if faith exists in any human heart, the growth of faith into assurance will depend quite as much upon the character of the life as upon any acuteness of mental vision.

On the whole, I come to the conclusion that while no man is capable of arriving in the matter of religious belief at that same kind of certainty which belongs to such a subject as mathematical science, all men have that religious instinct, that God-given power of communion with Himself, which enables them to accept all things "which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health." No truth is more worthy of acceptance, or has been more frequently enforced, than the need of something beyond the logical intellect in order to enable the mind really to lay hold upon Christ and His Gospel. Is not this, in fact, the truth which is expressed by the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 12.



language of our Lord Himself? *I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes.*<sup>1</sup> And the same teaching is otherwise expressed in those words of St. Paul: *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.*<sup>2</sup> Nor is this a truth for which we are dependent upon Scripture authority only; every one who has had any intercourse with the poor of Christ's flock will be aware of the perfectly clear vision, with which simple unsophisticated minds are able to discern and to lay hold upon Him. Whether we call it an application of a special sense, or religious instinct, or the gift of the Holy Spirit, as a matter of fact there is some power of apprehension of Christ and of Christian mysteries, which is as wonderful as it is undeniable. The poor man's cottage sometimes contains treasures of wisdom and knowledge not necessarily found in the books of the learned.

It must be insisted upon, however, with reference to the main purpose and idea of this volume, that, whatever view we adopt with regard to the possibility and the means of attaining certainty in questions of religious belief, the foundations of the Creed are the same. Any one who desires to give, either to himself or to those who ask him, an explanation of the hope that is in him must refer ultimately to reason or history or faith, or to a combination of these, as the ground upon which he believes. Without reference to such ground belief is mere fanaticism; and the recognition of a special sense, whereby the mind can pronounce a decision concerning truth and error, is the high-road to the quagmire of scepticism, unless it be guarded by a rational examination of the foundations upon which the Creed stands. It is, in fact, the Creed and its foundations regarded as one structure, partly above the ground and therefore visible, partly under the ground and therefore invisible, upon which the mind must pronounce, in such a

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke x. 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

manner as it may be able, whether the structure is the work of God or whether it is a mere human erection which will ultimately perish, as all human works must and do.

II. A few words shall be added on the question of the necessity for certainty in matters of religious belief.

It has already been admitted that a craving for such certainty exists in some minds, and it has been suggested that the proved possibility of accepting the Pope of Rome as an infallible guide is in itself a remarkable testimony to the extent and depth of this craving. In fact, there is an exceedingly large number of earnest-minded persons, who would agree in the necessity which exists for infallible guidance or for some kind of certainty in religious matters, and who would differ only as to the manner of finding it. The Holy Scriptures are to some what the Catholic Church is to others, and what the Pope is to others still. Nevertheless, when we consider with ourselves what is the probable purpose of God with regard to His human creatures, when we look upon mankind as placed in a state of probation for the formation of character and preparation for a higher life, we cannot but perceive that it is by no means self-evident that the possession of accurate knowledge must be the chief element of spiritual training: if this were so, the position of mankind would be more difficult to understand than it is, and the dealings of God with men as described in Holy Scripture would be simply an insoluble puzzle. There is no appearance in Holy Scripture of any intention to give to mankind a complete book of knowledge. Whatever may be said of the New Testament, the teaching of the Old is obviously and confessedly imperfect; in fact, the excellence of the New demonstrates the imperfection of the Old. But even with regard to the New Testament, it is a baseless assumption that it is intended to reveal all that it is possible for man to know: we see confessedly *through a glass darkly*; <sup>1</sup> and the great thing to recognise is, that we have light enough to find our way, not that we have light enough to see everything which might conceivably be seen with clearer light

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

or by eyes more keen than our own. Who has not read what Bishop Butler has written concerning mankind as placed in a state of probation?

People sometimes speak or think of the need of certainty in religious matters as though the great judgment of God was destined to reproduce some of the least admirable features of a human criminal court; as though advantage would be taken of ignorance or weakness by a judge anxious to condemn: we have had not a little of this kind of doctrine in modern sermons and modern popular religious literature. But there is no ground for such a supposition either in reason or in Scripture. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*<sup>1</sup> Will He who *is love*,<sup>2</sup> and who *gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*,<sup>3</sup> be ready to condemn those whose fault is want of knowledge?

The facts seems to be, that in the sphere of Christian life there is a kind of knowledge, a kind of certainty, a kind of infallible assurance, which grows out of faith. The soul first believes, and then knows: or rather faith is the seed which puts forth first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, and that full corn is knowledge. Or, to take another figure, we may say that faith starts the pilgrim on his journey towards the Celestial City; that as he proceeds upon that journey he learns lessons—very varied lessons—day by day, by trial and trouble, by meditation and prayer, by combat with doubt and other spiritual foes; and so he grows in grace, till he knows Him in whom he has believed. This kind of knowledge is within the reach of all who strive for it; it is revealed to the simple; it grows by quiet submission and obedience: it finds food in the daily round and the common task; it is not a knowledge which depends upon proof in the ordinary sense of the term, or upon an infallible guide; it is an anticipation of that knowledge, which belongs to the whole company of Heaven and to the spirits of just men made perfect in the presence of God.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xviii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 8.

<sup>3</sup> St. John iii. 16.

## CHAPTER II

### ARTICLE I

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER  
OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

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*The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world  
are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,  
even His eternal power and Godhead—ROMANS i. 20*

*CREED USED AT THE BAPTISM OF PALMATIUS*

CIRC. A.D. 220.

1. *Credis ex toto corde, in Deum Patrem omnipotentem,  
Factorem omnium visibilium et invisibilium?*  
*Respondit Palmatius, Credo.*
2. *Et in Jesum Christum, Filium ejus?*  
*Et ait, Credo.*
3. *Qui natus est de spiritu Sancto  
Ex Mariâ Virgine?*  
*Palmatius respondit, Credo.*
8. *Et in Spiritum Sanctum;*
9. *Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam;*
10. *Remissionem Peccatorum;*
11. *Et Carnis resurrectionem?*  
*Et exclamavit cum lachrymis Palmatius, dicens,  
Credo, Domine.*

*Harmonia Symbolica, p. 106.*



## CHAPTER II.

## ARTICLE I.

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF  
HEAVEN AND EARTH. (R., F.)

THIS great fundamental Article of the Creed may be conveniently discussed in three parts, according to the following division:—I believe in God: the Father Almighty: Maker of Heaven and Earth. It admits of further subdivision, but for the purpose of this book that which is now made is sufficient.

1. *I believe in God.*

In the forefront of the discussion let it be said, that it is impossible to conceive a more solemn and far-reaching assertion than this. The man who believes in God and the man who does not believe in God, whichever be right and whichever be wrong, must of necessity look upon life, upon themselves, and upon all their surroundings, from opposite points of view. It is difficult, if not impossible, for the believer to realise the mental and spiritual condition of the unbeliever, and perhaps the converse proposition is also true. Hence there is ground for the exercise of mutual charity and forbearance; and certainly it is well for those who believe in God to abstain from harsh denunciations of those who say that they do not believe; especially as unbelief has different causes, different degrees, and even different meanings. It may mean the craving of a logical intellect for clearer proof than it can find, it may mean a revolt from really untenable views of the Divine nature, it may mean mere laziness and indifference to solemn subjects, and it may mean rebellion against moral law. It is in fact a negative thing, and therefore is

difficult to define; but no charitable feeling toward those who profess not to believe in God need prevent those who do believe from esteeming their belief as their most precious treasure, and from regarding those who are not rich in the possession of faith as being poor indeed; they are in fact unworthy of the great privilege of believing, if they do not regard their belief as the guide of all their thoughts and the crown of their spiritual convictions.<sup>1</sup>

Belief in God may be regarded as the first and most necessary condition of a holy life, and as such it has an unspeakable moral and practical value; but it is also true that it has an intellectual foundation deeper than almost any other article of the Creed, and this intellectual foundation must now claim our attention.

The being of God may be discussed on grounds of pure reason; and though there are difficulties, neither few nor small, it may be said that reason decides in the affirmative. It is perhaps not too much to assert that the universal mind of man, the judgment of the human race, the verdict of the world, has affirmed the being of God. It is true that if one philosopher gives another a challenge to produce a proof which shall be absolutely free from flaw, the proof may be hard to find.<sup>2</sup> An argument or a chain of reasoning may be constructed, which shall be received with applause and which to many minds shall seem irrefragable, and yet some ingenious critic may detect a weakness or even a *petitio principii*. It has in fact been maintained by some philosophers that the being of God is like the axioms of geometry, something the truth of which underlies all other

<sup>1</sup> I have always been much impressed by the following eloquent words spoken by M. de Montalembert in the French Assembly (January 1850), on the subject of Scepticism: 'Messieurs, croyez bien que je suis à mille lieues de vouloir poursuivre le scepticisme dans le secret des âmes—rien n'est plus loin de ma pensée. Quand je me trouve en présence de ces âmes ravagées, je m'incline, avec une sorte de respect, si je puis employer ce mot, comme devant une grande infortune ou devant une grande indigence.'

<sup>2</sup> Kant in his *Critick of Pure Reason* tells us that 'there are only three proofs possible from speculative reason as to the existence of God': the physicotheological, the cosmological, and the autological. He then proceeds to demolish the proofs successively. Nevertheless he admits that 'the conception of a Supreme Being is in many respects a very useful idea.'

truths, and which must be assumed because there is nothing beyond it or below it. For example, Coleridge writes:

I hold that all the (so-called) demonstrations of a God either prove too little, as that from the order and apparent purpose in nature; or too much, namely, that the world itself is God; or they clandestinely involve the conclusion in the premisses, passing off the mere analysis or explication of an assertion for the proof of it, a species of logical legerdemain not unlike that of the jugglers at a fair, who putting into their mouths what seems to be a walnut, draw out a score yards of ribbon—as in the Postulate of a First Cause. And lastly, in all these demonstrations the demonstrators presuppose the idea or conception of a God without being able to authenticate it, that is, to give an account whence they obtained it. For it is clear, that the proof first mentioned and the most natural and convincing of all (the cosmological, I mean, or that from the order of nature) presupposes the autological—that is, the proof of a God from the necessity and necessary objectivity of the idea. If the latter can assure us of a God as an existing reality, the former will go far to prove His power, wisdom, and benevolence. All this I hold. But I also hold that this truth, the hardest to demonstrate, is the one which of all others least needs to be demonstrated; that though there may be no conclusive demonstrations of a good, wise, living, and personal God, there are so many convincing reasons for it, within and without—a grain of sand sufficing, and a whole universe at hand to echo the decision!—that for every mind not devoid of all reason, and desperately conscience-proof, the truth which it is the least possible to prove, it is little less than impossible not to believe! only indeed so much short of impossible, as to leave some room for the will and the moral election, and thereby to keep it a truth of religion, and the possible subject of a commandment.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, it has been as confidently asserted that the being of God is beyond our experience and our powers of

<sup>1</sup> *Aids to Reflection*, p. 131. 'Christian dogmatics ought not,' as remarked by Van Oosterzee, 'from its stand-point to overlook the importance of other so-called proofs of the existence of God; much less to make common cause with those who speak with a certain contempt thereof, as a fruit of defective reasoning and foolish imagination. On the contrary, it must and will deplore the levity with which the assertion, in itself true, that God's existence cannot be proved (demonstrated) is frequently repeated, understood, and applied in a way which, as much as possible, plays into the hands of unbelief and scepticism.'—*Christian Dogmatics*, p. 240.

thought, and that therefore we must be content to regard it as something which the human mind cannot grasp or know; so that the folly of him who says there is a God is equal to, and neither greater nor less than, the folly of him who says there is no God. This *agnostic* phase of atheism, for atheism it practically is, may be perhaps regarded as the most prevalent in our own days. It is only fair to say that some who pose as *agnostics* object to be regarded as *atheists*; but the assertion that *agnosticism* practically amounts to *atheism* can scarcely be regarded as unreasonable.

The agnostics (writes Professor Momerie), though not dogmatically denying the existence of God, very frequently maintain that our experience—so far as it goes—seems to imply His non-existence, or at any rate His utter separation from the present system of things. Theologians have always attempted to explain nature by the hypothesis of design or purpose. They have maintained that the order, harmony, and adaptation which we see around us, necessarily involve the existence of a Being, personal, conscious and intelligent, by whose volition this order and adaptation have been produced. But now the agnostics will have it, that the theories of evolution and natural selection give a full and sufficient explanation of the universe, without any reference to supernatural design or purpose; and indeed they sometimes go so far as to assert that these theories are quite incompatible with the supposition that God has had anything whatever to do with the world in which we find ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

It is not possible, however, to deal completely in this book with the atheistic or virtually atheistic theories of the various schools of philosophy, whether metaphysical, agnostic, positivist, or any other. It must suffice to refer the reader to other works, of which there is no lack.<sup>2</sup> So far as the present argument is concerned, let it be observed that whatever be the objections and difficulties of all the philosophers of all the schools, there are

<sup>1</sup> *Agnosticism*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> It would be easy, but perhaps useless, to append a list of books to which reference may be made; I will content myself with naming two small volumes, which contain the argument for belief in God in terms much adapted to modern needs: *The Being of God*, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol (S.P.C.K.); *Belief in God*, Professor Momerie.



certain lines of argument which carry practical conviction to the minds of the majority of men and women who think. For example, the idea of *cause*, of which it is difficult to divest the mind, seems to have in it the germ of the idea of God. How did things come to be as they are? Is it possible to conceive of the great material machine of the universe, to say nothing of moral considerations, without adopting the hypothesis of a creating and governing mind? How can evolution get rid of this underlying hypothesis? Can any progress which we have made or ever can make in the knowledge of nature, enable us to regard nature as anything else than the work of a supreme artificer? It is not maintained that this kind of argument is not open to attack; what is maintained is this, that, although ingenious persons may find fault with it, it is probably substantially sound, because it is so very difficult not to accept it. There are many truths in the world which are received upon imperfect evidence; and certainly there are propositions which every sane man accepts, and which yet he cannot demonstrate to be true with mathematical precision.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'There is great danger of the want of perfect logical demonstration of a positive proposition being regarded as proof that the negative of that proposition is true. No greater mistake can be made; and the mistake sometimes leads to sad consequences. In proof of this let me refer to a book entitled an *Examination of Theism*, by "Physicus." The writer does not give his name, and I do not know who he is; but he is evidently an able man. The process adopted by "Physicus" is this. He collects and considers all the demonstrations of the being of God that he can find, or that he regards as worthy of attention: he overturns them one after another, to his own satisfaction, and, for argument's sake, I will grant that he has succeeded in overturning them; lastly, having done this, he is reduced, as he supposes, to atheism. And then he finishes his book with one of the saddest, most eloquent, and most pathetic passages I ever read, in which he bitterly deplores the result to which (as he imagines) his reason has conducted him. He confesses that he had much greater satisfaction and happiness in his old belief; he yearns to believe in God; he seems to think that his soul needs belief; but in obedience, as he supposes, to inexorable logic, he throws over belief, and announces himself an atheist. Now it may be true, at all events I am willing to grant, that an ingenious man may have found a flaw in every one of the so-called demonstrations of the being of God; but how does it follow from this, that he is logically compelled to say there is *no* God? A thing may be perfectly true, every one may believe that it is true, it may be safe to rest any weight upon the supposition that it is true, and yet there may be much difficulty, perhaps practical impossibility, in proving it. Probability, not demonstration, is the guide of



'Napoleon's *savants*, Bourrienne tells us, in that voyage to Egypt were one evening busily occupied arguing that there could be no God. They had proved it, to their satisfaction, by all manner of logic. Napoleon, looking up into the stars, answers, "Very ingenious, Messieurs: but *who made* all that?" The atheistic logic runs off from him like water; the great fact stares him in the face: "Who made all that?"<sup>1</sup> This retort seems to express the natural conviction of the human mind: it rebels against ingenious sophistries: it cannot get rid of the fact of a cosmos: it cannot conceive a cosmos without a presiding mind. 'I had rather believe,' writes Bacon in his Essay on Atheism, 'all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind. And therefore God never wrought miracle to convince atheism, because His ordinary works convince it. It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion.' Thus Bacon held that although atheism might exist, and although (as he admitted) 'you shall have atheists strive to get disciples, as it fareth with other sects,' still the denial of God is in its root moral, not intellectual. 'The Scripture saith, *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*; it is not said, *The fool hath thought in his heart*; so as he rather saith it by rote to himself, as that he would have, than that he can thoroughly believe it, or be persuaded of it.' In like manner Sir Thomas Browne writes:—'I have been these many years of opinion, that there never was any [infidelity or atheism]. . . . That doctrine of Epicurus, that denied the providence of God, was no atheism, but a magnificent and high-strained conceit of His majesty, which he deemed too

ordinary life. Therefore a man ought not to allow himself to fall into a mental position, against which his soul protests, merely because he conceives himself to have demolished all logical proof of the being of a God.'—*Walks in the Regions of Science and Faith*, p. 227.

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's *Lectures on Heroes*, p. 385. I may perhaps quote the language of the hardest-headed statesman of this generation, in a somewhat similar sense. Speaking in the debate on the Socialist Bill in October 1878, and alluding to the atheism prevalent amongst Socialists, Prince Bismarck is reported to have said that he would not desire to live a day longer, if he had not what Schiller calls the 'belief in God and a better future.'

sublime to mind the trivial actions of these inferior creatures. That fatal necessity of the Stoics is nothing but the immutability of His will.<sup>1</sup> If Bacon and Sir Thomas Browne had lived in the nineteenth century they would not and could not have denied the existence of genuine atheism, and of atheism maintained by those who pose as philosophers and men of science and leaders of thought. This is perhaps the principal religious difficulty of the present time; many controversies have died out; many questions which profoundly agitated the minds of our ancestors now scarcely excite a ripple upon the stream of thought; but the question of the Divine existence has assumed a position of practical importance which it never occupied in former days; it has ceased to be the property of philosophers and a theme for the schools; it is brought within the sphere of thought of the labourer and the mechanic. Strenuous efforts are made also in a variety of ways to give atheism currency and to supply various substitutes for belief in God, such as secularism, agnosticism, and the religion of humanity; concerning which efforts it shall suffice in this place to say, that while one effect of them must be to lead believers to reconsider the ground upon which their belief rests, while some of the arguments upon which stress has been laid in the past may be exploded, and while it is to be feared that some persons may be robbed of their most precious possession, it is inconceivable that any attacks can utterly destroy a belief, which has so deep, so rooted, so ancient, so universal a hold upon the mind and heart of man.

The intention of this book, however, is rather to indicate the grounds upon which the several articles of the Creed rest, than to show precisely how the structures have been erected upon those several grounds. With regard to the article of belief in God, it would seem that such belief must rest upon an appeal to the reason in the last resort; no doubt in practice belief in God, or, at all events, the belief that we believe in Him, comes to us from early teaching, and, having so come, is retained, because it seems to correspond to an instinct, and to satisfy

<sup>1</sup> *Religio Medici*, p. 54.

the conscience; but when we arrive at such an age, or are placed in such circumstances, that we find ourselves compelled to give an account of the faith that is in us, then we cannot, in examining our foundations, stop short of the rock of human reason. For belief in God must logically take precedence of all other religious belief. There can be no revelation unless we first recognise a revealer. The mind may be ready to receive a message, but it cannot even conceive the possibility of a message without believing in the existence of him who sends the same. So that belief in God, in its simplest barest form, must throw us back upon our reason as its ultimate ground. It is only a rational being that can say 'I believe in God.' Faith, in the true sense of the word, has no field for its operations, until the reason has first assented to the fundamental proposition of a Supreme Existence.

It may be further observed, that the phrase 'I believe in God' may be regarded, when carefully analysed, as equivalent to the expression in the Nicene Creed, 'I believe in *one* God.'<sup>1</sup> It may not be immediately clear that this is so; but perhaps a little reflection may lead us safely to the conclusion. If we rest our rational belief in the being of God upon the idea of cause, and speak of the necessity of conceiving an origin for the physical universe and for all phenomena, including man himself, it may not appear at once self-evident that we must needs conceive only *one* cause. When I see a building, a house, a church, or what not, I feel safe in concluding that it must have had an architect; but if anyone should say, 'How do you know that two or more architects were not engaged in the work?' it might be difficult to reply; the character of the building might not be so clearly the harmonious expression of the thought of one mind as to justify the conclusion that it certainly had only one architect. The analogy, however, between an architect and a creator is only partial; and it may

<sup>1</sup> 'The Eastern Creeds, as Rufinus remarks, are characterised by the explicit assertion of the *unity* of the Godhead. The Creeds of St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Facondus Hermianensis, are cast in this respect in the Eastern mould; and they are the only Western Creeds, as far as I am aware, that are so.'—*Harmonia Symbolica*, p. 127.

be argued that rational belief in God does, in reality, involve the conception of an absolute and ultimate unity, of which the figure 1 is by no means a complete representation. There is, in fact, no special virtue in the number *one*, which mathematicians describe as *unity*. The unity of God means the absolute distinction of His being, as original and independent and self-existing, from all other being. All other being must be regarded as dependent upon and derivative from Him. Unity means eternity, ubiquity, universality. It means a condition independent of time and space. Nothing short of this suffices. Thus regarded, it is something, not perhaps which mankind embrace at once with a ready instinct, still less which they easily think out for themselves, but rather which, when put before them, all thoughtful persons recognise as the highest and worthiest conception that can be formed of God.<sup>1</sup>

This view of the subject is quite consistent with the historical fact, that there has been manifested in the history of the human race a very general tendency to multiply gods. Polytheism is, as experience has shown, of more easy growth than Monotheism. This need not surprise us. If it be true that a large portion of what may be called natural theism is connected with sun-worship as its source, it might be anticipated that the unity of God would not be an abiding feature of such theism. The sun is the chief and most glorious of the heavenly bodies, but it does not exist alone; if the sun be taken as the representative of God, the moon and stars may suggest an infinity of inferior

<sup>1</sup> 'Quod autem diximus, Orientis Ecclesias tradere unum Deum Patrem Omnipotentem, et unum Dominum, hoc modo intelligendum est, *unum non numero dici, sed universitate*: verbi gratiâ, si quis dicit unum hominem, aut unum equum, hic unum pro numero posuit; potest enim et alius homo esse, et tertius, vel equus. Ubi autem secundus vel tertius non potest jungi, unus si dicatur, non numeri, sed universalitatis est nomen. Ut si exempli causâ dicamus unum solem, hic unus ita dicitur, ut alius vel tertius addi non possit; unus enim est sol: multo magis ergo Deus cum unus dicitur, *unus non numeri sed universalitatis vocabulo nuncupatur*, id est, qui propterea unus dicatur, quod alius non sit.'—*Rufinus de Symbolo*, quoted by Bishop Pearson; who also quotes Moses Maimonides as saying, *God is one not two, or more than two, but only one: whose unity is not like that of the individuals of this world; neither is He one by way of species, comprehending many individuals; neither one in the manner of a body which is divisible into parts and extremes; but He is so one, as no unity like His is to be found in the world.*



deities. Certainly the moon would claim her place in the pantheon; nor could the planets be easily omitted. And if we put the thought of sun-worship aside, and consider the possibility of other suggestions of theistic thoughts, there seems to be no reason for affirming the existence of any source from which the conception of God could grow, so unique and so overwhelmingly superior to all others as to force the mind into belief in one God and one alone. Possibly among some nations, perhaps among the ancient Egyptians, perhaps among the Greeks and the Romans, while the religion of the populace, and officially of the priests, was polytheistic in the extreme, there might be an esoteric teaching handed down from primitive times, in which was enshrined the truth of the unity of God. But when Moses delivered the great doctrine to the Israelites, it came to them as, and it in fact was, a new revelation. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.*<sup>1</sup> This was not a mere arithmetical proposition; it was a great moral, religious, and even metaphysical truth, branching out into infinitely varied moral consequences. It was a simple equivalent of the *I am that I am*,<sup>2</sup> which was the mysterious form of the message as first entrusted to Moses. It was the basis of the religious education of the Israelites which was one day to enlighten the world. And it is instructive to observe how difficult it was, and, for many generations, impracticable, to preserve this dogma in a pure and living form; it was easier to write it on tables of stone than on the fleshy table of the human heart; it was, according to modern phraseology, in advance of the moral and intellectual condition of the people to whom it was declared, and it required centuries of severe and varied training so to engrave it upon the conscience of the ancient Church that it should be realised by that Church as its title-deed. It is quite clear, from all we read in the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament, that the Israelitish mind had what may be called an affinity for polytheism and idolatry; the weeds might be cut down or even uprooted, but they sprang up again with as much vigour as ever; it was not till after the

<sup>1</sup> Deut. vi. 4; St. Mark xii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus iii. 14,



return from Babylon that the evil seed was thoroughly destroyed.

Long, however, before that time the Hebrew literature bore testimony to the reality and living character of belief in the one God. No argument for this belief can be stronger, even in our own days, than that which is to be found in the Book of Psalms. For the purpose of this argument it is not necessary to assert that the Psalms are the work of one author, nor even to inquire into the authorship at all. The more varied the authorship, so much the stronger is the argument. For here, as a matter of fact, we find the communing of devout souls with God expressed in language of such intensity, and at the same time such simplicity, that it cannot be left unnoticed by the most careless and can hardly perish by lapse of time. A few passages shall be cited out of many hundreds as illustrations of the point which it is intended to enforce.

*The Lord is my Shepherd : therefore can I lack nothing,*<sup>1</sup> and the whole of the Psalm.

*Like as the hart desireth the water brooks : so longeth my soul after Thee, O God,*<sup>2</sup> and the whole of the Psalm.

*O God, Thou art my God : early will I seek Thee,*<sup>3</sup> and the whole of the Psalm.

*I will cry unto God with my voice : even unto God will I cry with my voice, and He shall hearken unto me,*<sup>4</sup> and the whole of the Psalm.

Now let the reader examine these passages (or rather the whole of the Psalms referred to), and consider what they mean. The language is human language, and indeed of the very highest order of poetry and passion ; it expresses, we may well believe, true human feelings—not the feelings of some strange or moon-struck fanatic, but those of ordinary hearts ; in reality thousands and millions of persons of many nations and tongues have read and do read such language over and over again with gratitude to those who wrote it, like that which is felt towards some master poet, because the feelings of their own hearts are described in language transcending in strength and beauty all

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxiii, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xlii. 1,

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lxiii. 1,

<sup>4</sup> Ps. lxxvii, 1,

that they could have devised for themselves; and thus it is demonstrated that an affinity exists in the pure thoughtful human heart with the conception of a supreme governing and loving God. Twice in the Book of Psalms the denial of a God is treated as a demonstration both of folly and wickedness: but the condemnation of atheism is not nearly so striking a characteristic of these ancient hymns of the Church as the expression of ever-abiding love towards God as a personal protector and friend, and as an ever-present guardian and guide, of which so many of them are full to overflowing. It seems almost inconceivable and incredible that the object of such intelligent, highly conceived and nobly expressed feelings of personal love can be a transient dream or a fiction, to be exploded in due time by the advance of the human mind. Can the movement be in advance, must it not be awfully retrograde, which destroys all sympathy between the heart of man and such utterances as have been quoted from the Book of Psalms?

Additional and incidental light may be thrown upon the truth and power of the dogma of the Divine unity by considering what happened upon its republication by Mahomet. The preaching of Mahomet was not nearly so wonderful as that of Moses; it was, in fact, only the emphatic declaration of a truth which the Christian Church had for centuries consecrated as an article of faith in her grandest symbol, but which had practically and wrongfully been permitted to fall more or less into the shade. The world ought not to have needed such teaching three centuries after the publication of the Nicene Creed; and to take that article out of the Creed, and to publish it in its bare form, with only the addition of the asserted commission of the new prophet, was not gain but infinite loss. Nevertheless the dogma proved to be one of enormous power, and the success of Mahomet may be taken as some kind of measure of that power. Nor was the power a mere passing one, depending upon the personal influence of the Prophet or upon his sword. That personal influence passed away and that sword has long been sheathed, but Islam remains: it is one of the great spiritual facts of the world's history, and although important subsidiary considerations have to be taken into account in order to explain all the

phenomena, it would be unphilosophical and short-sighted not to perceive in the enduring and influential character of Islam, amongst other things, a clear indication of the living power of belief in the one living God. Allegiance to the great truths which Islam rejects does not interfere with this conclusion. Everyone who has travelled in the East must have been struck by the intensity of the power exercised by belief in God, however deteriorated in its practical application, upon the Muslim mind, even in our own days. It is unquestionably still a living thing.

My present purpose, however, is not to discuss the manner in which Mahomet, or even Moses, proclaimed the unity of God, but rather to examine the foundation of belief in God as the first article of the Christian Creed. What is urged is this, that the foundation of this great dogma must be sought and found outside the limits of direct revelation. The Holy Scriptures themselves testify, in the Old Testament, that *the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy-work*; <sup>1</sup> and in the New, that *the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, even His eternal power and Godhead*.<sup>2</sup> It may be added that from one end of Holy Scripture to the other the being of God is assumed as an undenied and undeniable truth. Men having only the light of human philosophy in olden time, or men trusting too exclusively to the light of science in modern time, may each in their own way raise an altar to *the unknown God*; <sup>3</sup> but even such an altar, unsatisfactory and insufficient as the dedication proves it to be, at least admits that there is a God of some kind. Let the being of God then be granted; and in the light of this truth of a Godhead, resting upon the reason of man, we may rise to the vision of other truths which God has revealed, and come to that blessed, though it may be still imperfect, knowledge of Himself which He has given us in and through Jesus Christ.

But the assertion of the being of God, or even of His unity, does not exhaust the teaching of the Church upon this fundamental element of theology. We pass on to consider some further points.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xix. 1.<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 20.<sup>3</sup> Acts xvii. 23.

## 2. *The Father Almighty.*

There are two ways in which the name of Father may in this place be regarded as applied to God.

The first is that which is suggested by the fact that almost immediately after declaring our faith in God the *Father*, we proceed to declare our faith in Jesus Christ His only *Son*. The conclusion is inevitable, that the word Father in the first article of the Creed must be regarded in connection with the word Son in the second; and that when we speak of God the Father, we mean the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This conclusion is rendered all the more secure when we bear in mind that the Apostles' Creed, which has been for many centuries and is still the baptismal symbol, may be regarded as an expansion, with certain additions, of the original baptismal symbol given by our Lord and still used, according to which converts or infants are baptized 'in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' In this simplest of symbols there can be no question as to what the title of Father means; it can only be taken in connection with the word Son which immediately follows. The point is too clear to admit of doubt; and therefore, in the more expanded form of belief in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as contained in the Apostles' Creed, we seem to be bound to accept the same interpretation.

And this is the view taken by Bishop Pearson, who, after referring to other senses in which the notion of paternity may be applied to Almighty God, writes thus concerning the conception of Him as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ: 'I conceive this, as the most eminent notion of God's Paternity, so to be the original and proper application of this article of the Creed; and that not only because the ancient fathers deliver no other exposition of it, but also because that which I conceive to be the first occasion, rise, and original of the Creed itself, requireth this as the proper interpretation.'<sup>1</sup>

We shall be in a better position to attempt the contemplation

<sup>1</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. i. p. 60.



of the mystery of the relation of the Eternal Father to the co-eternal Son, when we have discussed those articles of the Creed which are concerned with the Incarnation. Meanwhile, it may be sufficient to say that there can be no question as to what must be the nature of the foundation upon which belief in this mystery must rest. Reason is out of court; only Faith can be alleged. That a mysterious relationship between the Father and the Son underlies the whole New Testament system, and was taught from the very first, it seems impossible for any student of the Holy Scriptures to doubt. The final commission to the Apostles to baptize converts in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost is but the gathering up and concentration of the doctrine which permeates the Gospels. Let me produce a few illustrative examples. *I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.*<sup>1</sup> *Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*<sup>2</sup> *Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done.*<sup>3</sup> *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*<sup>4</sup> *We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.*<sup>5</sup> *The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.*<sup>6</sup> St John's Gospel is filled with language similar to that which has been last quoted; but I have taken quotations from all four Gospels in order to show that there is on this point a complete harmony amongst them. So in the Acts of the Apostles we read of *waiting for the promise of the Father,*<sup>7</sup> and of *receiving of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost.*<sup>8</sup> Equally distinct, and still more varied are the utterances of the Epistles. *Christ was raised from the dead by the Father.*<sup>9</sup> *To us there is but one God,*

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xi. 25.<sup>2</sup> St. Mark xiii. 32.<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxii. 42.<sup>4</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 34.<sup>5</sup> St. John i. 14.<sup>6</sup> St. John i. 18.<sup>7</sup> Acts i. 4.<sup>8</sup> Acts ii. 33.<sup>9</sup> Rom. vi. 4.



*the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him.*<sup>1</sup> *I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named.*<sup>2</sup> *It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.*<sup>3</sup> *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>4</sup> *He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came to Him such a voice from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*<sup>5</sup> *Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.*<sup>6</sup> *And lastly, Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*<sup>7</sup>

This catena of quotations, which might easily be much lengthened, will make it manifest, that the Apostles, and therefore the earliest teachers of the Christian Church, had a very clear doctrine concerning God the Father, understanding by the phrase the relation between the Father and the Son, or between God and the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is this doctrine, to be accepted on such authority, which we are chiefly to regard as expressed in the first article of the Apostles' Creed. Nevertheless it is unnecessary to confine the meaning of the article to this highest and most mysterious region of thought. The fatherhood of God to mankind, depending upon the double fact of creation and redemption, should not be banished from the mind when a Christian says, 'I believe in God the Father.' To do this would be to forget some of the most emphatic teaching of Christ Himself. One great section of the Sermon on the Mount, including the Lord's Prayer, has for its text the fatherhood of God. *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven.*<sup>8</sup> *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*<sup>9</sup> *Ye have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven.*<sup>10</sup> *Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.*<sup>11</sup> *Pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 6.<sup>2</sup> Eph. iii. 14.<sup>3</sup> Col. i. 19.<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. i. 3.<sup>5</sup> 2 Pet. i. 17.<sup>6</sup> 1 John i. 3.<sup>7</sup> 2 John 3.<sup>8</sup> St. Matt. v. 45.<sup>9</sup> St. Matt. v. 48.<sup>10</sup> St. Matt. vi. 1.<sup>11</sup> St. Matt. vi. 4.

*secret shall reward thee openly.*<sup>1</sup> *Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.*<sup>2</sup> *Our Father which art in Heaven.*<sup>3</sup> There are several other examples in the verses which follow the last quotation; but I will omit them, as having already adduced sufficient evidence, and will merely add that great emphasis is given to the use of the term Father as applied to disciples by the change of language which is to be observed in the last use of the word Father that occurs in the Sermon on the Mount. *Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven.*<sup>4</sup> So that after all, as our Lord Himself said upon a notable occasion, it is *My Father and your Father; My God and your God.*<sup>5</sup>

On the whole, we should do well to take a comprehensive view of the phrase *God the Father* as it occurs in this article. We may even include in our conception of the Divine fatherhood such thoughts of God as men were able to attain without the revelation which is contained in Holy Scripture: in doing which we shall only be following the example of St. Paul, who in the presence of an Athenian audience quoted a Greek poet as claiming that man is the offspring of God. St. Paul quoted this language and preached upon it, drawing the conclusion that they who are *the offspring of God ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.*<sup>6</sup> It would not be difficult to find much that is instructive, and even pathetic, in the efforts made by human nature to claim and recognise the fatherhood of God, outside the limits of the ancient Church of Moses, and the more modern Church of Christ. We find in Homer a Zeus who is father both of gods and of men; indeed, as Bishop Pearson has observed, 'wheresoever God hath been acknowledged, He hath been understood and worshipped as a father; the very heathen poets so describe their gods, and their vulgar names did carry Father in them, as the most popular and universal notion;' and it has been asserted that 'sons of God will be found occupying a conspicuous place in the mythology of every

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. vi. 6.<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. vi. 8.<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. vi. 9.<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. vii. 21.<sup>5</sup> St. John xx. 17.<sup>6</sup> Acts xvii. 29.

people which has left any strong impression of itself upon the history of the world.'<sup>1</sup> Nor need it be doubted that the quotation which St. Paul made from Aratus to the Athenians expressed a sentiment which was common to many other minds; while, at the same time, we may search through all the literature that has been preserved to us without finding anything equivalent to such words as those of Christ, in which he tells us that *a sparrow cannot fall on the ground without our Father*,<sup>2</sup> and in which He bids us to be kind and gentle, in order that we *may be the children of our Father in Heaven, who makes His sun shine upon the evil and upon the good, and who gives rain to the just and the unjust*,<sup>3</sup> still more in which He directs us to address our daily prayers to *Our Father*, who knows beforehand all that we need. The name *Father*, as applied to God, occurs seventeen times in the course of the Sermon on the Mount.

It may be well also here to refer to the conception of God placed before the Israelites in olden times, as of one who should emphatically be *loved*. Thus in the second commandment the promise of mercy is to *them that love Me and keep My commandments*.<sup>4</sup> So again we have exhortations such as the following: *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*.<sup>5</sup> It is out of love that true worship must grow. It would be impossible to love the heathen gods; they might be objects of terror, but not of love; and there is amongst those who hold to such gods little or nothing, which we who know God can regard as true worship. It was this element of love in the religion of the ancient Church, which made it the possible and adequate foundation of the Church of the New Testament. And so our Lord told the Pharisees that *the first and great commandment* was this: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*.<sup>6</sup> God the Father can be thus loved, and therefore can be worshipped: the conception underlies Holy Scripture from beginning to end.

<sup>1</sup> Maurice's *Theological Essays*, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. x. 29.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. v. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xx. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Deut. vi. 4, 5.

<sup>6</sup> St. Matt. xxii. 37.

Perhaps, before leaving this subject, it should be remarked that, from the Christian point of view, the two conceptions of the fatherhood of God, which have been discussed, may be regarded as blended into one. *The Spirit itself*, writes St. Paul, *beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.*<sup>1</sup> And again, *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son then an heir of God, through Christ.*<sup>2</sup> The meaning of which passages would seem to be that in and through Christ, the Son of God in the highest sense, men rise from the mere sonship of creation to the sonship of adoption, and to all those privileges, which, according to the Christian scheme, have become the heritage of humanity through the Incarnation. And so in baptism, the person baptized is said to be made 'the child of God;' not as though all men were not in a certain sense children of God, and, as such, entitled to be regarded as the head and crown of creation; but, as becoming the child of God in a new and peculiar sense, which is only possible when the name is linked with and interpreted by that other name 'a member of Christ.' Union with Christ causes those who are united to Him to be recognised as new-born children of the same Almighty Father of whom Christ is the only begotten Son.

Something must now be added concerning the title Almighty. It is one with which we are familiar in our English translation of the Bible from the days of Abraham. The Greek and the Latin theological nomenclatures have each a word to which the English word *Almighty* may be taken fairly to correspond. The title Almighty in theology may, I suppose, be regarded as more than equivalent to the *infinite*, the *absolute*, or the *unconditioned* in philosophy; it implies the perfection of all moral and spiritual power; the ultimate source and origin of being; the I AM of Hebrew revelation. It is a remarkable fact that this word *Almighty* is the only epithet applied to God in the Christian Creed; many other epithets might have been

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 16,<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 6,



found in Holy Scripture, or might have been suggested by theologians, or even by the human heart, as *good, holy, pure, loving, everlasting, merciful*; the list might be easily extended, but it may be fairly assumed that the word Almighty was intended to suggest all qualities of perfection, which it would be impossible to enumerate exhaustively, and which, therefore, it is desirable and most wise not to attempt to enumerate at all.

Is reason a sufficient foundation upon which to base a belief in an *Almighty* God, or an *Almighty* Father? Perhaps in a certain sense it is; that is to say, if reason be sufficient to establish belief in God at all, it is difficult to conceive of belief in any but an Almighty God: the reason rebels against any limitation.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand this may be certainly affirmed,

<sup>1</sup> I cannot pass away from the consideration of the title Almighty without referring to the confident conclusions expressed on the subject by John Stuart Mill in his *Three Essays on Religion*. It will be seen from the passage quoted that the only view of the supernatural which he regards as worthy of any consideration is that which denies the Almighty character of God. Such a belief as Mr. Mill would concede to men would seem to be involved in as great difficulties as that which recognises God as Almighty, while the privilege of being *workers together with God*, which he deems reasonable, is especially granted to us under the Christian covenant; not, however, because God is weak, but because evil (in virtue of some necessity which the wit of man cannot fathom) is permitted to be strong. Mr. Mill writes as follows: 'One only form of belief in the supernatural—one only theory respecting the origin and government of the universe—stands wholly clear both of intellectual contradiction and of moral obliquity. It is that which, resigning irrevocably the idea of an omnipotent creator, regards nature and life not as the expression throughout of the moral character and purpose of the Deity, but as the product of a struggle between continuing goodness and an intractable material, as was believed by Plato, or a principle of evil, as was the doctrine of the Manicheans. A creed like this, which I have known to be devoutly held by at least one cultivated and conscientious person of our own day, allows it to be believed that all the mass of evil which exists was undesigned by and exists not by the appointment of but in spite of the Being whom we are called upon to worship. A virtuous human being assumes in this theory the exalted character of a fellow labourer with the Highest, a fellow combatant in the great strife; contributing his little, which by the aggregation of many like himself becomes much, towards that progressive ascendancy, and ultimately complete triumph of good over evil, which history points to, and which this doctrine teaches us to regard as planned by the Being to whom we owe all the benevolent contrivance we behold in nature. Against the moral tendency of this creed no possible objection can lie; it can produce on whoever can succeed in believing it no other than an ennobling effect. The evidence for it, indeed, if evidence it can be called, is too shadowy and unsubstantial, and the promises it holds out



that any idea of God which the human reason can produce for itself will fall short of the idea of God presented by the Apostles' Creed; any abstract conception of a supreme will or a supreme power will be doomed to barrenness. We cannot worship a law; we cannot love a force; we cannot be enthusiastic about an abstraction; we can only worship and love and feel enthusiasm for a living person, who is supremely loving. Nothing short of the conception of a living and loving person will have in it the seed of that knowledge of God which it is the purpose of the Creed to convey. The Almighty God, as we have seen, is Father in reference to the only-begotten Son, and also Father in reference to mankind as His children; in the nature of things reason cannot reveal this; and, therefore, while the abstract idea of God may be rightly attributed to reason, the idea of God as the Father Almighty must be assigned to reason and faith jointly. It is unnecessary to determine their respective proportions in their joint claim to be the foundation upon which this great mysterious truth rests; let it suffice to say that there is no strife or jealousy between them; each does its part, neither can perform the part which belongs to the other; and the wisest man may feel that he then best appreciates the revelation of a Father Almighty, when he himself most completely and most humbly realises his position as a child which needs to be loved and taught by that Father. *I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth*, said Jesus Christ, *that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*<sup>1</sup>

### 3. *Maker of Heaven and Earth.*

If we profess faith in God the Father Almighty, there is apparently no great difficulty in going on to declare Him to be the Maker of Heaven and Earth, in fact the Maker of all

too distant and uncertain, to admit of its being a permanent substitute for the religion of humanity; but the two may be held in conjunction, and he to whom ideal good, and the progress of the world towards it, are already a religion, even though that other creed may seem to him a belief not grounded on evidence, is at liberty to indulge the pleasing and encouraging thought that its truth is possible.'—*Three Essays on Religion*, p. 116,

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke x. 21.

things; or, as the Nicene Creed expresses the truth more emphatically, 'of all things visible and invisible.' This is the order of thought which commends itself to the believing mind; let the idea of God as the Almighty Father be firmly grasped, and the rest easily and necessarily follows. But the reason of man more readily adopts the opposite course. The natural tendency is to endeavour to rise from the observation of visible things to the apprehension of Him who made them. *The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.*<sup>1</sup> Faith descends from Heaven to Earth; reason ascends from Earth towards Heaven.

Nevertheless, it will be worth while, having especial reference to the needs and the thoughts of our own days, to lay stress upon the acknowledgment of God as the Maker or Creator of all things and even to emphasise the title by describing Him as the Intelligent Merciful and Loving Maker or Creator of the same. For there is a great and apparently growing tendency with a certain class of philosophers to get rid of the Christian idea of God indirectly, and without a blunt denial of a Divine existence. These philosophers find that the course of the universe is governed by law, they conclude that it always has been so governed, and they imagine that the change from chaos to cosmos and the continued orderly existence of all visible things can be explained by the hypothesis of evolution; all which shall for argument's sake be fully granted. But then they go on to say to those who believe that they see in this change from chaos to cosmos, and in the establishment and continuance of the universe, the mind and will and active agency of God the Father Almighty, something of the following kind: 'If you like to personify to yourselves the law according to which the phenomena of matter are evolved, you can do so; it will be a poetic fancy; it will do no harm, and at the same time it will do no good; it will be as though you should call thunder the voice of Jupiter or describe

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 20,

lightning as his artillery ; there is no life or reality in these theological imaginings.'

It can scarcely be denied that this method of dealing with the universe and its origin is to all intents and purposes atheism. To deny God as the author and origin and intelligent governor of the world and of all things is equivalent to saying, *There is no God*. It seems impossible to avoid this conclusion. We are thus brought face to face with the startling and momentous fact, that what seems to a large portion of mankind an almost self-evident truth is denied by some who have thought deeply on the subject, and who claim to be in a position to speak with some authority. Perhaps some light may be thrown upon this apparently strange fact by considerations such as the following. So long as we remain within the region and domain of science, the scientific man who tells us that he does not need the hypothesis of a creating or governing power, that is, the hypothesis of a God, is entirely within his rights. What science has to do is to observe, to investigate, to connect and explain phenomena. To the man of science, as such, the law of gravitation is the law of gravitation and nothing more. The great work of Laplace reduces the motion of the heavenly bodies to the laws of mechanics, and the work is complete without inquiring into the origin of the bodies whose motion is calculated or into the origin of their motion. The growth of plants, the generation of animals, even life itself, are merely phenomena to be investigated and their laws ascertained. To speak of God in the midst of these studies is to migrate at once into another region of thought. That region may be higher, more important, to some minds more interesting, than that in which the scientific man moves and has his being, but it is not his region ; if you enter it, you must leave him and science behind. Hence, perhaps, knowing how great is the tendency of the mind of each man to be engrossed in those subjects with which it is chiefly engaged, it is not altogether unintelligible or even wonderful that some scientific men—for it is by no means the case with all—should confound the truth that there is no place for God within the region of physical science with an erroneous counterfeit of this truth, namely,

that there is no place for God in the region of human thought. Observation of nature may suggest Newton's *Principia*, it may also suggest the worship of God.<sup>1</sup>

A partial illustration of the meaning of the preceding paragraph may be found by reference to music. Music is in a certain sense a science of numbers, it involves questions of lengths of strings or pipes, vibrations of air, interference of vibrations, and many other things which may be investigated scientifically; a man absolutely deaf to sounds might follow the investigations completely; just as a famous professor at Cambridge, being himself quite blind, studied and successfully

<sup>1</sup> I venture to quote what I have written in another place:—‘It seems to me that we want a new word to express the fact that all physical science, properly so called, is compelled by its very nature to take no account of the being of God; as soon as it does this, it trenches upon theology, and ceases to be physical science. If I might coin a word, I should say that science was *athous*, and therefore could not be *atheistic*—that is to say, its investigations and reasonings are by agreement conversant simply with observed facts and conclusions drawn from them, and in this sense it is *atheous*, or without recognition of God. And because it is so, it does not in any way trench upon *theism* or *theology*, and cannot be atheistic, or in the condition of denying the being of God. Take the case of physical astronomy. To the mathematician, the mechanics of the heavens are in no way different from the mechanics of a clock. It is true that the clock must have had a maker, but the mathematician, who investigates any problem connected with its mechanism, has nothing to do with him as such. The spring, the wheels, the escapement, and the rest of the works are all in their proper places somehow, and it matters nothing to the mathematician how they came there. As a mathematician, the investigator of clock motion takes no account of the existence of clock-makers. But he does not *deny* their existence: he has no hostile feeling towards them; he may be on the very best terms with many of them; it may be at the request of one of them who has invented some new movement that he has undertaken his investigations. Precisely in the same way the man who investigates the mechanics of the heavens finds a complicated system of motion, a number of bodies mutually attracting each other, and moving according to certain assumed laws. In working out the results of his assumed laws, the mathematician has no reason to consider how the bodies came to be as they are; that they are as they are not only is enough for him, but it would be utterly beyond his province to inquire how they came so to be. Therefore, *so far as his investigations are concerned*, there is no God, or, to use the word above suggested, his investigations are *atheous*. But they are not *atheistic*, and he may carry on his work, not merely without fearing the Psalmist's condemnation of the fool, but with the full persuasion that the results of his labours will tend to the honour and glory of God.’—*Walks in the Regions of Science and Faith*, p. 46. It is sometimes asserted that ‘Science eschews religion.’ This is a mistake. Certain scientific men do so: but there is no opposition between science and religion: such opposition is impossible, and the preceding remarks will help to shew that this is so.



lectured upon the science of Optics. Now suppose a person devoid of all scientific knowledge of music to say to one who had written a treatise on the subject, 'I cannot follow your scientific investigations; but to me it is heaven upon earth to listen to the compositions of Handel or Mozart or Beethoven.' What should the scientific musician reply? Certainly he would not be wise if he said to his ignorant but enthusiastic friend, 'It signifies little what Handel and Mozart and Beethoven have written, or even whether they ever existed: if you like to listen to what you call their music, there is no great harm in doing so, and no good either; but real music is to be found in this book of mine.' The two cases do not run in quite parallel lines; but the point which the reference to music is intended to illustrate is this, namely, the fallacy of supposing that one view of a subject is necessarily exhaustive. Music has more than one aspect; so has the physical universe. Music may be a matter of dry mathematics; it may also have the magical power attributed to it in the story of Orpheus. The physical universe in like manner may be a problem for scientific investigation to Newtons and Laplaces and Darwins; it may be none the less a revelation concerning a Heavenly Father to the weakest and the simplest of His children. So that we may rightly and philosophically eschew the notion, which some scientific men have not been ashamed to promulgate, that the heavens do not declare the glory of God, but only the glory of Sir Isaac Newton and of those who have followed in his steps. The assertion that the heavens declare the glory of Sir Isaac Newton is, in one sense, undeniably true; in another, it is intolerably profane.

Again, it is sometimes asserted that, however possible it might be in olden days, in the childhood or youth of the human race, to believe in a Maker of Heaven and Earth, such belief is impossible now. This assertion it is desirable not merely to contradict, but to examine: contradiction does not go for much, but sometimes it is possible by looking into an erroneous statement not only to perceive that it is erroneous, but also to ascertain why and in what manner it is so. Now it may be conceded—it is, in fact, undoubtedly true—that the progress of science in modern times has made it necessary in innumerable



points to modify and correct the views of our ancestors. Exact science is in reality of comparatively modern date; and each period of twenty years witnesses immense growth, accompanied by corresponding changes, even revolutions, of opinion upon all kinds of subjects. The progress of science is perhaps almost, if not quite, as destructive as it is constructive. The Palace of Science, like that of the Cæsars, has been rebuilt and enlarged from time to time, and each building has rested upon the ruins of that which preceded it. Science and Theology occupy, so to speak, different levels in the region of thought: one may in a certain sense rest on the other; one may take somewhat of its outward shape and form from the shape and form assumed by the other; but, after all, they are independent, and ought not to be permitted to interfere with each other. Thus there is no proper and legitimate tendency in the work of science to weaken or destroy belief in God. Science teaches us much and ever more concerning the manner of His working: it overthrows crude and imperfect conceptions which have been rashly formed, and not unfrequently it enables us to see a beautiful simplicity where less accurate examination had detected nothing but complication and apparent awkwardness: Kepler's law of elliptic motion replaces the epicycles of earlier astronomers. But the manner of working has little to do with the abstract question of the existence of the worker: and the belief in an intelligent Author and Governor of the universe may be quite as firm and as necessary now, as it was when men fancied that they saw the direct action of a divine power in the lightning, the earthquake, and the storm.

This line of thought may make it convenient in this place to introduce some remarks concerning the making of heaven and earth as related in the Book of Genesis. The words of the Creed are in fact almost a quotation of the words with which the Book of Genesis opens. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*<sup>1</sup> The principal point which I should desire to urge is this, namely, that as the progress of accurate knowledge or science has led, as already suggested, to many

<sup>1</sup> Gen. i. 1.

changes of thought and opinion, so it is quite certain that much change has taken place with regard to the light in which the opening of the Book of Genesis is regarded by thoughtful minds. In earlier times, when little was certainly known, when in fact it may be said that nothing was known, by patient observation and examination of natural records, concerning the past history of the globe, our fathers drew conclusions from the record of Creation in Holy Scripture which the progress of knowledge has proved to be erroneous. Let me take an illustration from what Bishop Pearson says in summing up the teaching of that very article of the Creed with which we are now engaged. 'This,' that is, the creation of the world out of nothing, 'was done by the most free and voluntary act of the will of God, of which no reason can be alleged, no motive assigned, but His goodness; performed by the determination of His will at that time which pleased Him, most probably within one hundred and thirty generations of men, most certainly within not more than six, or at furthest seven, thousand years.'<sup>1</sup> It need scarcely be said that on the one hand this statement of Bishop Pearson is such as to be now absolutely untenable, and on the other that the weight and authority of the author of the great work on the Creed are not affected by an error and misconception which belonged to his time and which could scarcely have been avoided. When we consider that it is only two centuries since Bishop's Pearson's death, we may form some notion of the greatness of the change which has taken place since his time. But it will be observed that change in the manner of regarding the statements of Holy Scripture concerning physical facts, and other changes (it may be) still more deeply reaching, do not in the least affect the credibility or the importance of the statement in the Apostles' Creed. That statement does not deal with the manner or the date or any of the circumstances of the creation of the universe; it is consistent with any conclusions which the progress of

<sup>1</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. i. p. 121. In a note we are told that in the first edition the words stood, 'most certainly within much less than six thousand years.' The modification of these words seems to shew that even then six thousand years appeared too brief a computation.

science may successfully recommend to the reception of thoughtful minds; it is in fact religious and philosophical, rather than scientific; a scientific man is not bound to accept it because he is a man of science, but on the other hand he is not bound to reject it; science is constrained upon its own principles to stand aside, and to allow the instinct and common sense and universal tradition of humanity to confirm the opening statement of Holy Scripture or to give a verdict on their own account.

The whole question of the mutual relations of science and faith is one, as need scarcely be remarked, of great breadth and depth and difficulty. The article of the Creed with which we are now engaged touches the merest fringe of it. Hereafter we shall be engaged with a branch of the question, which will involve more anxious considerations than those which have come before us with respect to the creation of heaven and earth; so far as creation is concerned, it may be even argued that belief in a creating mind is at once more conformable to the suggestions of science and to the conclusions of philosophy than the contrary belief would be. It may be difficult to say, 'I believe in God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth'; but it would be still more difficult to say, 'I do not believe that the material universe had any creator at all.' Belief in a Creator at least takes us out of the region of matter, and raises us into the spiritual region of mind and will. Disbelief in a Creator leaves us in the presence of the fact of a material universe with no single help towards the understanding of its manifold mysteries. To believe in a Creator may be difficult; to most minds to deny His existence is nothing short of impossible.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On this whole subject I will refer to my small volume on *Creation*, being one of the series of *Helps to Belief*, edited by the Rev. T. Teignmouth Shore. (*Cassell & Co.*) The reference here made may explain why I have not discussed in this chapter the questions raised, concerning the making of heaven and earth, by the doctrine of Evolution. It would have been impossible to have discussed that doctrine suitably in this volume; but it is very much to my purpose to press upon the reader, that no form of the doctrine can properly dispense with the fundamental supposition of a power which underlies and pervades nature, and which theologically we call God. What the theory of evolution does, whether rightly or wrongly, is to suggest a certain method as that which has been followed in the actual genesis of nature; it suggests the manner of working, it does not logically

If it should be pleaded that the progress of knowledge, which as a matter of fact has led to much denial of God, also makes belief less necessary than it was in olden time—if in fact a creed should be regarded as belonging to the childhood of mankind—it should be urged, that belief in God is essential to the life and health of the human soul now as it ever was. Nay it may perhaps be said with truth that it is more necessary now than ever it was before. At all events it may be asserted, that knowledge can be no substitute for belief; knowledge may *puff up*,<sup>1</sup> but it cannot by itself *edify*. So far as the tendency of science is to substitute the conception of law for that of a living God, the progress would seem to be distinctly retrograde. It is undeniable that an entire devotion of the mind to one branch of science may have the effect of producing a mental atrophy or paralysis with regard to other subjects. And though it can be only the few real devotees of science who are open to this danger, still it may very well be that the semi-scientific atmosphere in which all educated persons more or less live, may have in a smaller degree the same kind of unwholesome influence. If this be so, a scientific age is not one in which to decry creeds. In such an age, an honest man must carefully look to the grounds upon which his faith rests; the difficulties of belief may be greater than in simpler times; some things which our fathers held we may be unable to hold any longer; some grounds of belief may be proved to be unworthy to be rested upon; some arguments which were brought forward with confidence in former days may have to be withdrawn; the apologetics of the Church may have to be reconsidered and rewritten from time to time; but still faith will be the same real and living thing, *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*;<sup>2</sup> and belief in ‘God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth,’ will prove to be lasting and unchangeable as the being of Him in whom we express our belief.

The thoughtful reader will, I trust, consider that I have done

or philosophically dispense with the antecedent idea of the worker; this at least is the view of the subject which commends itself to my mind as the only tenable one, and which I would commend to the reader.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 1.



right in assigning reason and faith as the joint foundations of this first article of the Creed. The proportion of the weights resting upon the two foundations respectively may be regarded as uncertain, and possibly as varying from one mind to another; but concerning the need of both there can, I am persuaded, be no doubt or question.

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I have drawn a line between the preceding portion of this chapter and that which follows, because there will probably be some readers to whom the considerations adduced will be of a not very intelligible character; while to some I venture to believe that they may prove interesting and suggestive.

In a note, upon page 61, I have quoted some remarks of Mr. Mill with regard to the only form of belief in the supernatural which he considers to stand clear of intellectual contradiction and of moral obliquity. This form of belief denies the existence of a God who is *Almighty*, and therefore cannot be accepted by one who holds the Apostles' Creed. But it may be worth while for those who believe in an Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth, to consider in what manner it may have pleased God to limit His own power by the act of creation. It is a familiar thought that, although we commonly and properly speak of the power of God being unlimited, there are obvious limitations to that power of a certain class; limitations, for example, of a moral kind. God cannot lie, cannot repent, cannot act in any manner contrary to the law of love, which constitutes His very essence, for *God is love*.<sup>1</sup> But beyond limitations of this character, the existence of which is so obvious, and so manifestly assumed in any assertion of God's Almighty power, that it is doubtful whether they can be properly recognised as being in any true sense limitations, there are others to which it may be said that Divine power submits itself when it manifests itself in certain ways. This is a thought worthy of development, the more so as it seems to give the true explanation of the difficulty which Mr. Mill's view of a Creator of limited power must of necessity suggest.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 8.



Let it be observed then, that when Divine power manifests itself in material creation, there are certain laws which obviously claim recognition. The laws of geometry, to take the most obvious example, must be observed. The relations of space are independent of all choice or volition, and if an Almighty will should be pleased to manifest itself in a material creation, the laws of space must obtain throughout that creation, and the Almighty will may be properly said to be limited by those laws.

This will be obvious to every one who has thought upon the subject; but it is perhaps not so obvious that matter (whatever matter in its ultimate essence may be) has laws, some of which are probably quite as inherent in the nature of things, and therefore quite as necessary and as irrefragable, as the laws of geometry or space. We do not know enough about matter to be able to say positively upon what grounds its laws rest; but it seems not improbable that the fundamental law, according to which each particle of matter attracts every other particle with an intensity directly proportional to the particle's mass, and varying inversely as the square of the distance between the particles, is what may be called a necessary law, that is, a law as inherent in the nature of things as that according to which the surface of a sphere varies as the square of its diameter. But even if the law of attraction be not of this necessary kind—if it be conceived as a law impressed upon matter by the volition of a creating power, that is, if we conceive that matter was brought into existence by a creative will, and that when it was so brought into existence the constitution under which it should exist was determined by that same will—the result will be the same, so far as the present argument is concerned. For in either case—that is, whether the law of attraction be inherent like a law of geometry, or impressed by a creative will—the law exists and must be obeyed. Now the necessary result of this law is the motion of the heavenly bodies, which observation and calculation have detected; and the motion of the heavenly bodies includes, not merely the nearly circular motion of the earth round the sun, which seems so well adapted for the purposes of animal life, but also those eccentric motions of comets in parabolical or

hyperbolical orbits, which appear to be incompatible with life or with any of the higher purposes for which the heavenly bodies may be conceived to exist. Let the reader who understands the terminology reflect, that in the nature of things elliptic motion cannot exist without a concomitant possibility of parabolical and hyperbolical motion; or, as perhaps the truth may be expressed, that the existence of a world like that which man inhabits involves of necessity the possibility of the existence of worlds in which human life cannot be maintained. So that in forming the solar system Divine power may be said to have submitted itself to the limitation of producing a result, in which there is an inherent possibility of the existence of elements which may be described as unnecessary or as anomalous.<sup>1</sup>

Now if we regard Almighty God as the Maker of a material universe, we must regard Him as having been pleased to assent to those conditions, which either the nature of things in general, or the nature of the particular department in which He is pleased to manifest His operative power, or both, impose upon the unfettered action of His supreme will. If an illustration may be drawn from human makers, it may be said that when an artist gives expression to his thoughts, he has to consider the limitations imposed upon him by the material in which he has determined to work. A sculptor has one class of limitations, a painter another, a poet a third. Suppose three men, having equal inspiration of genius, called upon to commemorate the death of Nelson—a sculptor, a painter, and a poet. The results would be, for the first a group of marble figures, for the second a coloured canvas, and for the third a book. It might be hard to say which was most effective, which would touch most deeply the heart of the English nation; but the point is, that the conditions of the three works would be widely different; and each artist would have to consider, or rather perhaps he instinctively would consider, to what limitations he was subjected by the laws of his art or by the conditions of his material, and would not be able to regard

<sup>1</sup> See this subject discussed at greater length in *Walks in the Regions of Science and Faith*. Essay II. : *The Unity of Nature*.

himself as absolutely free. May not similar considerations be applied without irreverence to the Almighty artist? There is no reason to suppose that matter is the only thing in which He manifests His creative power; but when he is pleased to adopt this method of manifestation, is it not clear that He thereby limits His own power, and is compelled by His own Divine act and deed to submit Himself to the laws which belong to the department in which He is pleased to work?

In making this suggestion I have taken my stand upon the known laws of matter, because in doing so I have solid ground upon which to tread: but may not the view of the subject which is thus opened up be much extended, and that with advantage? For example, when Mr. Mill tells us, that 'the notion of a providential government by an Omnipotent Being for the good of His creatures must be altogether dismissed,'<sup>1</sup> may it not be replied that the necessity is avoided by the consideration that the government is subject to those laws which are either inherent in the nature of things, or which the Omnipotent Being has imposed? The great question, whether with regard to the original creation or with regard to the government of that creation, so far as the present inquiry is concerned, is this—to what limitations did Almighty God submit His power of operation, when He was pleased to manifest that power in a material creation? And as we have seen that limitations are involved with regard to planetary motion, so also it may be suggested as probable that similar limitations may be involved in the department of biology. Life may have apparent anomalies inherent in it as well as mechanical physics: many phenomena which seem strange may be the results of a general law: it may very well be true, that a material universe could not exist at all without the accompanying existence of certain phenomena, which, regarded by themselves, appear to be unintelligible, or to indicate the absence of omnipotence in the Creator. There may be phenomena in the animal and vegetable kingdoms corresponding to the comets and meteoric stones of the solar system.

This view of the subject may be extended even into the

<sup>1</sup> *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 243.

moral department of God's creation and government. The existence of a creature having an independent will involves the supposition of a limitation of the power of God. The mere force of the term *independent will* proves that this is so. If we assume God's omnipotence, and conclude therefore that creation is entirely within His own power, we may take it as a necessary consequence that He need not have permitted the existence of a creature with an independent will; but if in His wisdom He sees fit to call such a creature into existence, it is manifest that He to some extent puts a limitation upon His own omnipotence. So that there may be phenomena in the moral world, which may lead rash persons to say that they are inconsistent with the supposition of an infinitely wise and powerful and good God, and which may yet in reality be only indications that for reasons, which have seemed good to Him, He has seen fit to limit in certain directions His own absolute supremacy.

Such a conception of the relation of God to this world, with a corresponding explanation of its difficulties and strange anomalies, may be maintained as being much more reasonable than the denial of the existence of an Almighty God, to which Mr. Mill committed himself. This denial is to my own mind far more difficult of acceptance than the admission of the great postulate of omnipotence. In a physical and moral system confessedly only imperfectly understood, it is easy to suggest many possible conditions which may give rise to the appearance of imperfect power on the part of God, the Creator and Ruler of all; but to assert an absolute limitation of that power seems to destroy the very conception of Godhead, and to leave us in a perplexity of darkness from which there is no escape.

## CHAPTER III

### ARTICLE II

AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON OUR LORD

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*Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son  
of the living God—S. MATTHEW xvi. 16*



*THE CREED OF ST. CYPRIAN:*

CARTHAGE, A.D. 255.

- 1 *Credo in Deum Patrem,*
2. *In Filium Christum,*
8. *In Spiritum Sanctum.*
10. *Credo remissionem peccatorum,*
12. *Et vitam æternam,*
9. *Per sanctam ecclesiam.*

*Harmonia Symbolica*, p. 20.

## CHAPTER III.

## ARTICLE II.

AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON OUR LORD. (H., F.)

THIS second article may be regarded as the centre of the Apostles' Creed.<sup>1</sup> Its grandeur is best realised when it is read in connection with the corresponding article in the Nicene. '*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made.*' This latter must be regarded as the legitimate expansion of the former; it does not represent any new discovery concerning Christ; that which the fathers of Nicæa declared explicitly the conscience of the Church had held all along implicitly; the existence of heresies did not lead to the teaching of new truths, but only compelled a clearer declaration and definition of the faith as once delivered to the Saints. Hence, in reciting the simpler and more homely language of the Apostles' Creed, we may regard it as containing all the grander declarations which the more developed Creed contains.

It is not well to make comparisons between one article and another with respect to relative importance. It may be rightly contended that nothing can exceed in importance belief in God the Father Almighty; it may be said that this belief lies at the root of all other, as indeed it does; unless we first believe that God is, we cannot move a step in the journey of faith. *He that cometh to God must believe that He is.*<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, we may in a certain sense assign supremacy in the Christian Creed to that

<sup>1</sup> With regard to the whole subject of this chapter, it is perhaps unnecessary to refer the reader to Canon Liddon's *Bampton Lectures*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

article which professes faith in Jesus Christ, just because the Creed is the expression of the faith of Christians, not of mere Theists. The special privilege of members of the Christian Church is that they can not only say, 'I believe in God,' but that they can add '*and* in Jesus Christ.' The special requirement from those who seek entrance by baptism into the Church is that they should make this addition to faith in God. The Jews who joined the Church in early days were already sound in the faith of the one God; their difficulty and trial consisted in having to make an addition—to their minds, a strange and awful addition—to their old faith. Hence, while it might be theologically wrong to say that the second article of the Apostle's Creed is greater than the first, it is not wrong but rather useful and necessary to direct attention to it, as having an interest for Christians more peculiar and emphatic than that which attaches to the primary confession of faith in God.

It is an infinite step which we take when we pass to this second article of the Creed. We cannot for a single moment forget that He, to whom it refers as man, once lived upon earth and suffered and was *in all points tempted like as we are*.<sup>1</sup> The thought of introducing a human name into immediate juxtaposition and apparent equality with God the Father is a tremendous thought; involving either the greatest truth that man can know, or a falsehood to be scouted as blasphemy. The Christian Church takes its stand upon the assertion that Jesus Christ is rightly and truly associated in the Creed with God the Father. St. Paul did the same when he wrote that *being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God*.<sup>2</sup> Any one who thus regards the second article of the Creed will see what a mysterious and deeply reaching article it is.

On what foundations does it rest? It has been marked at the head of this chapter with the letters H. and F., as indicating that it has a certain amount of historical basis, but that it must rest upon faith as well. Reason, upon which so much stress was laid in the case of the first article, appears to be able to give little help here. No truth of course can be against reason;

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Philip. ii. 6.

but there are many cases in which it must needs stand by silently and respectfully, feeling that there are regions to which the human soul has access and into which reason is no sufficient guide. The doctrine of the Divine character of Jesus Christ is just such a case; in discussing it we shall meet with nothing to which the highest reason need take exception, but we shall find many things which reason could never have discovered. Therefore for all practical purposes reason may be set aside as a foundation of this second article.

But the same thing cannot be said of history. This must be carefully and constantly borne in mind. To deny the province of faith does not enable the deniers to get rid of the facts of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. History must be reckoned with by those who are the most determined not to yield anything to faith. On the other hand, the most earnest believer cannot afford to dispense with history; he takes history and faith together, rests upon both as co-ordinate foundations, recognises the manner in which each supplies the defects manifested by the other.

I proceed, then, to examine the second article of the Creed in the light of the remarks which have now been made. In doing so, it will be convenient to make a division into three parts. Jesus Christ: His only Son: our Lord.

### 1. *And in Jesus Christ.*

It is not without good reason that our Lord is described in the Creed by two names; that is, Jesus and Christ. To have spoken of Him simply as Jesus would have been to adopt a familiar form which, since His departure from this earth, none of His most notable disciples have either wished or apparently dared to use. It is known to everyone that Jesus was, at the time of our Lord's birth, a common Jewish name; for example, in Col. iv. 2, we read of *Jesus, which is called Justus*; and the name occurs in Josephus. In earlier times we have *Jesus the Son of Sirach*, described as the author of the book Ecclesiasticus, and grandson of a man of the same name. The name was

likely to be a favourite, being, in fact, the Greek form of Joshua, the great popular hero of olden times. It would be to the Jews something like what Arthur or Alfred is to ourselves. But, as with Arthur and Alfred, so with Jesus. The commonness of the name would, on common lips, deprive it of all reverence and solemnity; and few, probably, in using it, remembered its origin and accompanied the mention of it with the thought suggested by the message of the Angel to Mary, *Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.*<sup>1</sup> Taken in all its solemnity of meaning, no name can be more sacred than that of JESUS; anyone who, in repeating it, considers that it involves the doctrine of sin and the further doctrine of salvation from the guilt and power of sin, will treat it in the spirit of that passage of St. Paul in which he tells us that it is a name above every name, and one at which *every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.*<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the name Jesus, taken by itself, is a common name; and therefore, when cited in the Creed, it is accompanied by another name frequently joined with it in Holy Scripture, that is, Christ. *Jesus Christ: Jesus the Anointed.* Anointed to what? This we shall see more fully as we proceed; for the present let it be observed that there are three offices of which we read in the Old Testament that persons were anointed to fill them. The offices are those of prophet, of priest, and of king. Thus we read of the prophet Elijah: *The Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.*<sup>3</sup> Here are the anointings of two kings and one prophet. In like manner we read of the priesthood: *Thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office. And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats: and thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst*

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. i. 21.<sup>2</sup> Philip. ii. 10.<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings. xix. 15, 16.



*anoint their father, that they may minister unto Me in the priest's office.*<sup>1</sup> In fact, the ceremony of anointing in the case of the prophetic, the priestly, and the kingly offices, was so familiar to Jewish minds that *anoint* might be regarded as equivalent to *appoint*, and the title of *Christ*, or the *Anointed*, would convey of necessity the thought of Divine appointment to some high and holy office. I have specified the three offices of prophet, priest, and king, because these are titles truly and rightly attributed to the Lord Jesus, and because they represent offices with which, as a matter of history, anointing was connected in olden time; but I do not assert that the title of Christ ought to be restricted to these offices; these may be, and probably ought to be, regarded rather as the suggestions of the supreme office of Mediator, Advocate, Judge, and Lord, to which Holy Scripture teaches that the Jesus in whom we believe has been appointed or anointed by God the Father.

It may be well to emphasise the use of the phrase, 'Jesus Christ,' in the Creed, and to support what has been already said, by reference to the practice which we find to exist amongst the writers of the New Testament.

Take the Gospel of St. Matthew. It opens with this sentence, *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ.*<sup>2</sup> Here the solemn title used in the Creed occurs; it is repeated in a subsequent verse which introduces the Nativity; but throughout the Gospel it never occurs again. A similar observation applies to the Gospel of St. Mark. It opens with the sentence, *The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;*<sup>3</sup> and throughout the Gospel the title is not repeated. In St. Luke's Gospel the title does not occur at all. To prevent mistake it should be noted that the title Christ does appear as applied to our Lord. As for example in St. Matthew, *Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?*<sup>4</sup> So again in St. Mark, *The High Priest asked Him and said unto Him, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am.*<sup>5</sup> And once more, in St. Luke, speaking of Himself, the Lord says, *Thus it is written, and thus*

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xl. 13, 14, 15.<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. i. 1.<sup>3</sup> St. Mark i. 1.<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xxvii. 17.<sup>5</sup> St. Mark xiv. 61, 62.

*it behoved Christ to suffer.*<sup>1</sup> There is no question as to Jesus of Nazareth having claimed to be, and having acknowledged Himself to be, the Christ or the Messiah; what is asserted is that in the first three Gospels the title, Jesus Christ, does not appear except in the three instances specified. In the Gospel of St. John it occurs once, and in just that manner which emphasises the fact of its general and almost universal absence, namely, on a unique and most solemn occasion from the lips of the Lord Himself. In the great prayer which our Lord offered up in His Character of High Priest before His passion, we find these words, *This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and JESUS CHRIST, whom Thou has sent.*<sup>2</sup> The occurrence of the name in such circumstances appears to throw a light upon the whole subject. Jesus, the Son of Mary, was in reality Jesus Christ from the beginning; and in His own communings with His Father He might at any time have used the name, as He did upon the solemn occasion to which reference has just now been made; but so far as the world was concerned, even so far as His own disciples were concerned, He had, as it were, to establish His claim to be the Christ; and it was not until after His Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, that His title could be regarded as fully established, and so the name of Jesus Christ, or Jesus the Christ, be regarded as His and His alone. All which agrees very well with what St. John writes in the conclusion of the twentieth chapter of his Gospel, where, speaking of the signs which he has recorded, he says, *These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.*<sup>3</sup>

Speaking generally, therefore, it may be asserted that in the Gospel histories, Jesus Christ, the title used in the Creed, is not that by which Jesus of Nazareth is known. In these histories He is simply Jesus, sometimes indeed admitting both to friends and foes that He is the Christ, sometimes charging His disciples to keep this great truth a secret, sometimes permitting the truth to be known without such restriction;

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 46.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xvii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xx. 31.

but He is never Jesus Christ in the language of those who speak familiarly of Him. The addition of 'the Christ' to Jesus as the recognised glorification and coronation of the human name belongs to a later period. And so when we open the book of the Acts of the Apostles we perceive that we have entered upon a new era. Thus St. Peter says, *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins.*<sup>1</sup> Again the same Apostles says to the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.*<sup>2</sup> And once more, concerning the same lame man, St. Peter says before the Sanhedrim, *Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole.*<sup>3</sup> In fact the simple name of Jesus, which occurs everywhere in the Gospels, soon disappears almost altogether; it is so in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, it is still more markedly so in the Epistles; sometimes Jesus is called the Lord, sometimes Jesus Christ, sometimes the Lord Jesus Christ, sometimes simply Christ, but the human name hardly ever occurs by itself, and when it does, there is generally some special reason for its occurrence. It seems as if it had been felt by the Apostles, and by the rest of the early Church, impossible to apply to their Master a name which might be and was applied to many other men, without adding some epithet of honour which should distinguish the Jesus, whom they recognised as ascended into Heaven, from all others who might bear that now consecrated name. Thus, in reality, the compound name, *Jesus Christ*, may be regarded as containing in itself a short homily concerning the Divine character and office of Him, who, as a man, was known as Jesus of Nazareth. The whole Gospel might almost be said to be concentrated for believers in that sacred name. In this place, however, I prefer to lay chief stress upon the name as a respectful, honourable title of one, who certainly lived and preached, and was crucified more than eighteen centuries ago. It will be enough for such

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 38.<sup>2</sup> Acts iii. 6.<sup>3</sup> Acts iv. 10.

purpose even if we recognise the Lord in the same manner in which He is recognised in the well-known passage of Josephus, where (supposing the passage to be genuine) the historian says, 'About this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed we may call Him a man, for He was a doer of wonderful works. . . . He was the Christ.' The writer of this passage, though professedly not a disciple, would evidently not have scrupled to use the phrase Jesus the Christ. Postponing therefore the discussion of those points in our Lord's history by which His claim to be the Christ was established, and which form successive articles in the Creed, it may be well for us to fix our minds upon the historical truth, that there certainly did exist, more than eighteen centuries ago, one who has ever since been known as Jesus Christ. I have marked this second article of the Creed with the symbol H., in order to impress this historical truth. It is not of course urged that there is nothing but history underlying the article; there must be faith as well; as soon as we pass to the further part of the article, 'His only Son, our Lord,' we shall be in the region of faith altogether; but we should not lose sight of the historical element; and when this is once admitted, we may perhaps feel the difficulty of remaining where we are, and may perceive the necessity of admitting an element of faith in order to make intelligible and consistent what history tells us. Let us examine this point a little more closely.

The existence of an historical person in the Holy Land between 1800 and 1900 years ago, who bore the name of Jesus, who was known as Jesus of Nazareth, and of whom a large number of persons in every age since have professed themselves to be followers, is as certain a fact as that the sun shines, or that day and night follow each other. It is not urged at this moment that this Jesus did and said all those things, which are attributed by the four Gospels to Him whose deeds and words the Evangelists profess to record: it is open, to any one who pleases, to say that the Gospels contain mistakes or exaggerations or interpolations or what not: but no man possessed of the faculty of reason can put them on one side as complete fictions concerning a person who never had any historical



existence at all. And so it has come to pass that in modern times several authors, notably Strauss in Germany and Renan in France, have taken in hand to clear away the supposed accretions of error, and to lay before us what they deem to be the real truth. Each of the above scholars has written what he calls a 'Life of Jesus.' There are many other 'Lives,' written for various purposes and from various points of view.

Now it is manifest that a 'Life of Jesus,' which does anything more than attempt to collect and put in order the materials which the four Gospels supply, must enter upon the region of imagination and romance. For there is no pretence to the discovery of new materials: there is not a scrap of authentic evidence as to what Jesus said and did, outside the pages of the New Testament. It is easy to say that what the Gospels contain cannot be true, on the ground that the story is mixed up with miracles; but when you determine to discard the miracles, which are woven into the tissue of the history, and to construct the life without them, it is evident that you must depend upon grounds other than those which can be described as historical. Such works as those of Strauss and Renan cannot therefore in the nature of things be regarded as history: if they are right in any case in which the Gospels are wrong, their superiority must be due to acute critical power or to clever divination, and not to the power of appeal to any other authority. When Renan, for example, begins his 'Life of Jesus' by telling us that He was born in Nazareth, he contradicts the New Testament authorities which tell us that he was born in Bethlehem; but he quotes no authority outside the Gospels for contradicting their evidence.<sup>1</sup>

The point, however, upon which I desire just now to lay stress is this, that such writers as Strauss and Renan, while deeming themselves free to deal in any manner they please with the Gospel histories, never dream of denying the historical existence of Him whom we describe as Jesus Christ. To them, He is

<sup>1</sup> 'Jésus naquit à Nazareth, petite ville de Galilée, qui n'eut avant lui aucune célébrité. Toute sa vie il fut désigné du nom de "Nazaréen," et ce n'est que par un détour assez embarrassé qu'on réussit, dans sa légende, à le faire naître à Bethléhem.'—*Vie de Jésus*, chap. ii.



simply Jesus of Nazareth; but at least He is that; and in that character they acknowledge Him to be one of the notable men of history, whose lives ought to be written. What they endeavour to do is to reduce His life to human proportions; to get rid of miracle; to account for the supernatural colouring which the Church has succeeded in adding to the plain outline of His features; to evolve out of their imagination and by aid of their historical and critical faculties a Jesus of Nazareth, whose life and character will account for all those phenomena, the truth of which they acknowledge. If the phrase 'I believe in Jesus Christ' could be taken to mean, 'I believe that a certain man lived in Palestine in the days of Tiberius Cæsar, whose name was Jesus, whose father was a carpenter, who came to a violent death, and who established a society known as the Christian Church,' then Ernest Renan and many others who deny Christ would be orthodox believers. There would be no room for doubt or dissent of any kind.

There is a further point to be considered. They who endeavour, by writing critical histories of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, to reduce all that is to be believed about Him to human and natural proportions, do nevertheless leave upon their pages the portrait of a very wonderful man. They think Him wonderful themselves, otherwise they would not take so much trouble to describe Him and to correct popular errors concerning Him. They would probably not hesitate to say that His existence is one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest, of all facts in history. And if as much as this be granted, it may be questioned whether we must not demand something more, in order to make all that we know for certain concerning Jesus Christ intelligible. Strip Him of His miracles if you please; let the cross and the tomb be the end of His life's career; treat everything in the Gospel history which transcends the ordinary level of humanity as a fabulous incrustation due to the habits of a superstitious age, and yet after all it may be doubtful whether the great rationalistic problem has been solved. In the first place you have the picture of a character strikingly, almost infinitely, different from any other that ever existed; the invention of such a character by flattering disciples is as nearly

incredible as anything can be—almost as incredible as a miracle. Then you have a report of discourses, which are as wonderful as the portrait of their alleged author. Sometimes writers of fiction endeavour to magnify their heroes by telling their readers what wonderful discourses they made; but the readers are left to imagine what the discourses actually were. In the case of Jesus Christ we have actual reports of the discourses, and we can judge of them for ourselves. Are they inventions? If so, who invented them? Was there one amongst His disciples who can be reasonably credited with sufficient capacity, even if he had the will, to produce such literary gems? And once more, there is the remarkable fact that men like St. Paul, of whose ability and judgment we can form an opinion from his own writings, did unquestionably believe in the Divine character of this man, and did their best to form a society, the entrance into which depended upon the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as Master and Lord, which was bound together entirely by the power of His Name, and which exists to the present day. All this must be taken into account in connection with the recognition of Jesus Christ as a real historical personage; and therefore I lay great stress upon the historical foundation of this portion of the Creed. Deeply true as it is that a mere historical recognition of Jesus Christ falls infinitely short of what the human soul requires, still even an historical recognition is valuable, if only the seeker after truth will follow out the recognition, and go whither it leads him. History may lead on to faith; faith may prove itself to be the best explanation of history.

## 2. *His only Son.*

In the Nicene Creed we have, as has been already noted, a much expanded description of the Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ. *The only begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God.*

It is a magnificent declaration. We feel disposed, as we read it or repeat it, to believe that they who ventured in solemn conclave, representative of the whole Church of Christ, to devise

such language must have had upon them some special inspiration from God. To examine the language in all its details would not be in accordance with the purpose of this book; the explanation of the reason why such language was adopted and why such details were insisted upon is to be found, as doubtless the reader knows, in the history of the discussions and heresies of the first three centuries. The Council of Nicæa met, not to devise or invent a doctrine, but to bear testimony to the doctrine of the Church as it was believed ever to have been. It was the *Faith once delivered to the saints*,<sup>1</sup> not any new discovery or any new deductions from Holy Scripture, which the Nicene fathers professed to publish. It shall be assumed that this was so, that is to say, that the Apostles and those who immediately followed them intended to preach, though they did not so specifically define, the same doctrine as that which the Nicene Creed contains.

This being so, it may be urged that the fuller statement of the Nicene Creed, which it illustrates by the pregnant figure 'Light of Light,' was really contained implicitly in the phrase of the Apostles' Creed, 'His only Son.' Such a phrase is obviously figurative; the ordinary earthly relationship of son to father it is manifestly impossible to identify with the relationship of any being, whether created or uncreated, to Almighty God; one may be the shadow, the other the substance, but they cannot be the same thing; we must pass somehow into the region of figure, and then it will be possible, even for the ingenious and intelligent, perhaps for them more than others, to interpret the figure incorrectly or imperfectly. In fact, the expression 'Son of God' admits of many significations; and it would have been well that the expression as applied to Jesus Christ should have received some authoritative interpretation, even if the Arian heresy had not rendered such interpretation a necessity for members of the Church of Christ. Adam is emphatically described by St. Luke as *the Son of God*;<sup>2</sup> in the Book of Genesis we read of *sons of God* and *daughters of men*,<sup>3</sup> and of their union, whatever the language may mean;

<sup>1</sup> St. Jude 3.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke iii. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. vi. 2.

Nebuchadnezzar saw four men walking in that fiery furnace into which he had cast three men bound, and the form of the fourth is said to have been *like the Son of God*.<sup>1</sup> Other instances might be cited of similar language; in fact, St. John says of himself and all his brethren in Christ, *We are the sons of God*;<sup>2</sup> and the Church Catechism teaches each child to say that in the Sacrament of Baptism it was made *the child of God*. Consequently there is a manifest latitude in the phrase. Sometimes the context will decide in what sense it is used; sometimes after all consideration given the sense may be doubtful.

Hence, it is not to be wondered at, that when men had time to speculate concerning the faith which they had received, there should be found to be different opinions concerning the Sonship of Jesus Christ. Some of these might be more erroneous or more mischievous than others; but the view which commended itself to the great First General Council of the Church was this, that any opinion concerning Christ which diminished one iota from His consubstantial unity with the Father was false, and that any diminution was important and dangerous. This mode of regarding dogmatic truth is opposed to the current of modern thought; and it may be conceded, at all events for argument's sake, that the Christians, especially the Greek Christians, of the earlier centuries maintained an exaggerated estimate of orthodoxy, and omitted weightier matters; yet, if the truth which the Church professes to hold, and believes sincerely that she actually does hold, in trust for the whole human race, be indeed truth, and not a mere fiction, it is difficult to set limits to the importance of the work of guarding against error; the work may be carried on unwisely, or uncharitably, and so it may lead to mixed results; but concerning the work itself it may be argued upon sound philosophical grounds, and without any taint of fanaticism, that truths affecting the relation of God to man cannot be too carefully investigated or too earnestly maintained. Hence the Nicene fathers did a grand and important work for the Church when they fixed, for all generations to come, the meaning of the phrase, *His only Son*.

<sup>1</sup> Daniel iii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 2.



It may, however, be regarded as a happy circumstance that although the Nicene Creed has been accepted as the common expression of the faith of the whole Church, both Eastern and Western, the simpler phraseology of the Apostles' Creed should have been retained for the use of those seeking baptism, and as the ordinary expression of a Christian man's belief. The Apostles' Creed, not the Nicene, is the baptismal symbol. It is upon the reception of this simpler form of belief that a human soul is admitted into visible fellowship with Christ; for this charitable purpose nothing can be too simple; even the touching of the hem of His garment during the days of the Lord's sojourn amongst us was a sacrament of healing, and the most timid seeker after Christ should not be sent empty away. Hence, while we rejoice that the phrase 'His only Son' has been expanded and explained by the Nicene Creed, we may also rejoice that this grander and more explicit formula has not superseded the other for all purposes and occasions. Each has its place; and if we ask what is the proper place for each, we may be reminded that the two Creeds are connected with the two Sacraments. For the unripe convert, or for the child disciple, the simplest form is best; and so Baptism is made to depend upon the Apostles' Creed. For the full-grown believer, approaching God in the highest and most mysterious service which is permitted to the Church on earth, nothing can be too full, too lofty, too magnificent; and so in the office of Holy Communion we recite the grandest of the Church's Creeds, and proclaim the being of Christ as enunciated by the Nicene fathers.

The result of this discussion is to relegate this portion of the Creed to the region of faith, or, according to the notation which we have adopted, to mark it with F. History and Reason have no place here. History cannot come in from the nature of the case; and as for Reason, while it cannot fairly make objection, and cannot contradict, it may well confess that the Christian believer has mounted to a region whither it cannot find its way, much less act as a guide.

Nevertheless there is a side of this mysterious and transcendental view of the being of our Lord Jesus Christ, which



may possibly be within touch of human reason, and which it may be profitable to examine. The phrase, 'Jesus Christ, His only Son,' does in fact contain the great doctrine of the Incarnation. If Jesus Christ be, in that true and transcendent sense which is asserted by the Nicene Creed, the 'only Son of God,' then conversely it follows, as indeed is explicitly declared in the same Creed, that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ. *Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven . . . . and was made man.* This great doctrine of the Incarnation, running as it does through the whole of that part of the Creed which refers to the second Person in the Holy Trinity, belongs to the region of faith beyond almost any other. Yet it is well to observe that it is a doctrine, which, so far from presenting features specially repulsive to the human reason and from which the mind naturally shrinks, may be described in very different terms. It may be said with truth, that to not a few minds it has commended itself as meeting the cravings of the human spirit, and corresponding to human instincts. Nay, it may even be said to be within the limits of intellectual and religious effort so to contemplate the doctrine, as ultimately to come almost to the conclusion, that the Incarnation is something which might be known or at the least suspected to be true upon *a priori* grounds. In some branches of knowledge it is certainly possible to say, that propositions which appear at first sight difficult—it may be almost incomprehensible—do after much consideration become so completely divested of difficulty as to assume an axiomatic character. Many a proposition in pure mathematics and in mathematical physics, which a beginner finds hard to prove or even to understand, becomes after examination, to a certain class of mind, so clear that no formal proof is required. Sir Isaac Newton is said to have regarded all the propositions in Euclid's 'Elements of Geometry' as axiomatic; and many minds, though infinitely inferior to that of Sir Isaac Newton, yet having the true mathematical instinct, will find enough in their own experience to make them understand that the alleged intellectual feat of the great mathematician is a possible thing. May not something of the same kind take place in the spiritual region? May it not

be that the idea of a Divine Incarnation will on reflection recommend itself to thoughtful reverent minds on the ground of its inherent reasonableness? May it not be possible even to conceive of spiritual Newtons, princes in the spiritual world as he in the intellectual, to whom the Incarnation shall be as an axiom?

Perhaps the following remarks may tend to elucidate and to enforce what has been now suggested.

A thoughtful person may be conceived as discussing the Incarnation with himself thus: 'I believe in God who created man such as we know him to be. The Scripture tells me that God created man in His own image, and that through wilfulness man has fallen from his original state and has not realised the Divine ideal. This also I believe, not only because the Scripture tells me that it is so, but also because this view of human nature falls in with and explains so many of the moral phenomena which present themselves in the world. But apart from all revelation or speculation as to what man once was or was intended to be, I look at man as he is, with such vast capacities and such a power of believing that it is possible to know God, a creature of whose nature all history and experience prove that religious belief and religious speculations and religious cravings form an integral part; and I ask myself, Is it likely that God would have created a living soul, so capable of rising to the contemplation of Himself and so full of the instinct of worship, without intending to establish between man and Himself close ties of communion and fellowship? Except upon the hypothesis of such intention man's existence appears to be nothing short of a failure—almost a mistake. But if this be so, the further question occurs, How is the soul of man to be reached except by means founded upon his own natural constitution? If you want to communicate thoughts to a blind person, you must choose means adapted to the condition of blindness; if you want to communicate with the deaf, you must do likewise. We may speak in a figure of God giving man commands or promises, or what not; but in doing so, we necessarily assume that God somehow addresses man through man; commands and promises must come through human lips or human pen; and though it

may be true that this condition is satisfied by a man saying, as Moses and the prophets did, "*Thus saith the Lord*," will it not be more fully, and indeed completely, satisfied by one who can assume the higher tone which is appropriate to the utterances of one claiming to be Himself the Son of God? Hence when, after noting the manner in which the people who sat in darkness groped for the light and felt after God, I meet with the Jesus Christ of history, who uses such language as this, *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*;<sup>1</sup> *I came forth from the Father and am come into the world*;<sup>2</sup> *Ye believe in God, believe also in Me*;<sup>3</sup> with hundreds of utterances of the like kind—utterances which mean either blasphemy or incarnation—I feel disposed to say, Here in Jesus of Nazareth, whom men call the Christ, I find the solution of the great riddle of humanity. God could only really speak to man as man, and in Jesus Christ God has become man and has spoken by Him. My reason is satisfied.<sup>4</sup>

Let it be observed that the preceding reasoning is not offered as being demonstrative. It is only a suggestion of a mode of viewing the subject, by help of which it may be possible to regard the Incarnation, not as a mystery to be accepted on authority, so much as a truth which the intelligence of man may be prepared to welcome as reasonable and probable on general grounds. It is not asserted that the human mind unaided would have been able to say, that if the world was to be regenerated it must be through the instrumentality of a Divine incarnation; but it is submitted that patient and reverent contemplation, in the light of human experience and the needs of the human soul, of the teaching of Holy Scripture, may possibly lead to the acceptance of such teaching as being that for which the reason craves. The contemplative mind may say, This is what man-

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xi. 28.<sup>2</sup> St. John xvi. 28.<sup>3</sup> St. John xiv. 1.

<sup>4</sup> A friend, to whom this passage was read from the proof sheet, suggested to me that I should quote in illustration the following lines from Browning's *Saul* :—

O Saul, it shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee; a man like to me

Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!

kind needs ; this key opens the lock ; this doctrine must be true. Is it not worth while to regard such a result even as a mental possibility ?

On the whole, therefore, it is not quite clear that the symbol R. ought to have been excluded from this article ; but I have considered it better to make the exclusion, and to insert the preceding paragraphs in which the claims of Reason in respect of this department of Christian belief have been discussed, and (so far as may be) recognised.

### 3. *Our Lord.*

In classifying the articles of the Creed in conformity with the principle adopted in this book, it might seem at first sight clear that the words *our Lord* should be marked with the symbol F. It might be alleged that if the *Lordship* of Jesus Christ be accepted as truth, in the sense and in the completeness in which undoubtedly a multitude of His disciples have in all ages accepted it, this can be done only on the ground of faith. That the foundation of faith must be claimed, and that nothing else can adequately take its place, may at once be conceded ; and this view of the case shall be discussed more fully presently. Nevertheless, it is well to suggest, and it is now earnestly suggested, that, great as may be the claim of faith to be regarded as the evidence for the Lordship of Jesus Christ, there is an important sense in which this portion of the Creed may be regarded as resting on an historical foundation.

For as a matter of fact, which cannot be denied or even doubted, Jesus Christ has been regarded in a unique and absolute sense as Lord of His disciples, of His Church, of thousands of individual souls, from the earliest times. It has been already noted that the simple human name of *Jesus* is that by which He is known familiarly in the four Gospels ; but even in them the appellation *Lord* slips in (if the phrase may be permitted) from time to time.<sup>1</sup> Thus St. Luke writes, *The Lord*

<sup>1</sup> It may, of course, be said that this phraseology indicates that the passages containing it were written after *the Lord* had become the recognised title of Jesus Christ, which is probably true, but does not affect the argument.



then answered him, and said;<sup>1</sup> and again, *The Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.*<sup>2</sup> So likewise in St. John's Gospel. *When therefore the Lord knew;*<sup>3</sup> and again, *None of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord.*<sup>4</sup> The list might be easily increased. This exceptional use in the Gospels is only the anticipation of that which after the establishment of the Church became the universal and recognised nomenclature, and which testified to the quite unique position assigned by the hearts of the early Christians to Him whom they emphatically called *The Lord*. The amount of meaning attached to the name, its reality in the mouths of those who used it, its binding power over the hearts and lives of those who applied it to the historical Jesus of Nazareth, are sufficiently attested by their conduct. It was no mere title of courtesy; it was rather a name for the love of which Christians were ready at any moment to die, and for which in the first three centuries thousands did actually suffer death. The story of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John and Bishop of Smyrna, is not exceptional, but rather is to be regarded as a sample of what usually took place when Christians were called upon to deny Christ. It may be worth while to introduce the story, as it has been told by Bishop Lightfoot:

Unlike the aged apostle his master, the disciple was not permitted to close his long and active life in peace. A persecution was reigning—we know not for what cause or under what circumstances. . . . Eleven others had already fallen victims to the persecution, and made food for the wild beasts. . . . The appetite of the populace was whetted by this butchery. A cry rose, 'Away with the atheists! Let search be made for Polycarp!' Polycarp retired into the country. He was followed thither by a force of mounted police, accompanied by a servant boy, who under torture had betrayed his master's hiding-place. It was Friday evening about supper time. They found the old man in the upper room of a small cottage. He might have escaped, but preferred to remain, saying, 'God's will be done!' When apprehended he requested his captors to allow him a short interval for prayer. His request was granted, and for two hours he stood praying, so that all present were moved by his fervent utterances. Then,

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xiii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xviii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> St. John iv. 1.

<sup>4</sup> St. John xxi. 12.



seated on an ass, he was led to the city. Saturday morning had now broken and it happened to be a High Sabbath, so that the Jews were keeping holiday. He was met on his way to the city by the captain of the police who bore the ominous name of Herod. With Herod was his father Nicetes. Seating Polycarp in the chariot beside them, they plied him with entreaties to pronounce the virtual words of recantation, 'Cæsar is Lord,' and to throw a few grains of incense on the altar. Failing to move him, they thrust him out from the vehicle with such violence that he bruised his leg. The one the brother, the other the nephew, of Alce, a devout and renowned member of Polycarp's flock, they must have felt ill at ease in this untoward work, and there was doubtless real sincerity in their attempt to rescue Polycarp from his fate.

In the stadium meanwhile a great uproar arose which drowned every attempt to speak. As the old man entered a voice came from heaven, 'Polycarp, be strong and play the man!' It was audible to certain believers who were present, but the speaker no man could see. Again Polycarp was plied with entreaties. Again he resisted all overtures. The proconsul urged him to swear by the genius of Cæsar and say, 'Away with the Atheists!' He caught up the last word of his judge. With solemn visage looking up to Heaven, and waving his hand, he cried, 'Away with the Atheists!' The proconsul, perhaps mistaking this as a sign of yielding, pressed him further: 'Swear and I will set thee free; revile Christ!' His answer is memorable; 'Four-score and six years have I served Him, and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I speak evil of my King, who saved me?'<sup>1</sup>

I need not follow the narrative any further. The faithful martyr was burned; but we are not concerned with the manner of his martyrdom so much as with the truth to which he bore witness. That truth was evidently the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The invitation to say, 'Cæsar is Lord,' and so to save his life, is the best commentary possible upon the real nature of the transaction and the principle which Polycarp had at stake. Cæsar embodied to citizens of the Roman Empire at that time the highest conception of lordship; flattery and superstition converted the reverence for Cæsar into virtual idolatry; Cæsar was divine, and must

<sup>1</sup> *Apostolic Fathers*, Part II, vol. i. p. 436.

be treated as God ; but Polycarp and the Christians knew of one higher than Cæsar, and this was Jesus Christ who had been crucified more than a century before. Can anything shew more clearly what the aged disciple of St. John and those who thought with him meant, when they spoke of Jesus Christ as Lord ?

The whole history of the Church since the days of Polycarp makes it manifest, that the throne of pre-eminence which was erected for Jesus Christ in those early days has never been taken down. Attempts have been made by various schools of thinkers within and without the Church to do this, or at all events to modify and lower the throne ; but they have not succeeded. The Lordship of Jesus Christ in which the early Christians believed was fixed for ever by the clear, strong language of the Nicene Creed ; and it may be safely affirmed that, beginning with the days of the Apostles, there has been a continuous stream of testimony, which runs now as strongly and as deeply as ever, to the reality and transcendent character of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He has made Himself the Lord of His disciples' hearts, of their wills, of their whole lives, in a manner which may and does astonish philosophers, which they may deride if they please, but which, nevertheless, is an indubitable fact of history. It is well that we should recognise this historical foundation for our doctrine ; we are not concerned just at this moment to prove it by argument, as depending upon the discussion of passages of Holy Scripture, or examination of the writings of the Fathers ; it is something which is written in capital letters upon the history of the Church from the beginning till now.

This historical view of the doctrine is important with reference to modern controversies concerning Jesus Christ. I suppose it may be said, almost without dispute, that the tendency of modern unbelief is not in the direction either of denying the existence of Jesus, or of holding Him up as a conscious impostor with whom no terms can be made. Few in our own days would join with Voltaire in the cry of *Ecrasez l'infâme !* in fact, it has been seriously questioned

whether Voltaire himself intended by the words to insult the Lord Jesus Christ. What is desired by respectable controversialists is to put forth a theory, which shall in their opinion fairly meet the facts of the case, and yet shall keep within the limits of ordinary history and experience and shall avoid the supernatural. With this purpose they examine existing documents, reduce them by criticism to such form as they think they ought to assume, and then endeavour to extract from them, with the help of the general principles of science and philosophy, such conclusions as they imagine to be warranted by the premisses. This general description will, I trust and believe, be regarded as fair, and such as the critics would themselves accept.

Now, with regard to any such process for arriving at Christian truth, a reference to history is valuable. If it be a fact that for more than eighteen centuries there has been a continuous tradition in the society which Jesus of Nazareth founded concerning the character which He claimed, and which His followers conceded, this tradition must certainly be an important element of consideration. It is not of course alleged that there has ever been a time when the tradition has not been assailed; it was assailed in the times immediately following the Lord's life upon earth, and the attack has never ceased through all the centuries; opposition, denial, contempt, have constantly dogged the Church's course; there have been fightings without and heresies within; but what is asserted is this, that there has ever been a body or men, calling themselves the Christian Church or the Catholic Church, who have recognised Jesus Christ as their Lord in an absolute and unlimited sense. Take, for example, the following language of St. Paul. Writing to the Church at Philippi, he uses these words: *What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*<sup>1</sup> There is abundance of similar language in the apostolic Epistles, as

<sup>1</sup> Philip. iii. 7, 8.

every reader knows; and the point which it is desired to enforce is this, that there ever have been since apostolic times, and that there are now, multitudes of persons who sympathise with this enthusiastic language, do not deem it fanatical, regard it as *words of truth and soberness*.<sup>1</sup> This continuity of tradition and perfect accord of thousands of hearts, under all kinds of varied conditions, do not afford a demonstrative proof of the correctness of the opinion held in common; but it is certainly difficult to believe that two thousand years after the *Annus Domini* men should for the first time discover important truth concerning Him, whose Lordship is signed and sealed by the phrase which marks the succession of our ordinary Calendar years.

It is not denied, nor would it be wise or even possible to deny, that in some departments of thought lapse of time produces great and inevitable changes; some things which our fathers believed are now simply beyond the pale of rational belief, and some views and opinions which were once accepted almost without inquiry are now upon inquiry found untenable. Witchcraft, magic arts, touching for the king's evil, are familiar examples. But it is submitted that the Lordship of Jesus Christ is not a case of this kind. Jesus of Nazareth, whose history (speaking generally) cannot be doubted by even the most sceptical, did as a matter of fact produce a certain remarkable result upon the minds of His contemporary disciples and of those who followed them; they summed up the supreme and sovereign character which they assigned to Him under the title of *Lord*; and the question is whether there is any good ground for believing that they made a mistake, which we in the present century are in a position to correct. Science and criticism may help us to form new and sound opinions on many things; but are they able, is it their business, to contradict the impression of a certain man's character, which unquestionably was made upon those who saw Him in the flesh, those who immediately followed Him, and those who upon the strength of their own

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvi. 25.



personal convictions have preserved the tradition of this character as their own most precious possession? That is the question.

Before proceeding further, let me make a remark upon a peculiarity of the language in which the Creed rehearses the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The basis of the Creed is a personal declaration of belief—I believe; throughout all the articles this personal character may be regarded as being maintained. And rightly so; whether the Creed be looked upon as a baptismal symbol, or as a formula of worship, it is in either case the personal belief of him who recites the words of the Creed with his lips, that gives to the recitation its force and meaning. Nevertheless, in declaring the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the language is, not *my* Lord, but *our* Lord. It is the only case in which the plural number occurs in the Apostles' Creed. The use may be explained and illustrated by comparison with the Nicene, in which we find the words 'one Lord Jesus Christ, . . . who for *us* men and for *our* salvation came down from heaven.' This language, 'us men,' would seem to extend the words *us* and *our* to the whole human race; and doubtless no other interpretation is sufficiently broad. In a certain sense, the Lordship of Christ may be restricted to those who acknowledge Him; Christian disciples may say '*our* Lord' in a more exact and emphatic sense than others, as when the Lord said to His disciples on the eve of His passion, *Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am*;<sup>1</sup> but the Lordship of Christ extends far beyond the company of His faithful, loving disciples; He is the Lord of men; according to those words of prophecy, *Ask of Me and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession*.<sup>2</sup> There is no corner of the world to which, according to the belief of His Church, the Lordship of Jesus Christ does not reach.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm ii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> The remark just made is emphasised by the manner in which the Apostles' Creed occurs in the Book of Common Prayer. The prayers are common, and the recitation of the Creed is also common: nevertheless throughout the prayers the phraseology is always *we*, *us*, *our*, according to the pattern set by the Lord's Prayer, and also according to manifest propriety: it is only in the rehearsal of



This extended and, in reality, universal character of the Lordship of Jesus Christ will come before us again and more emphatically, when we arrive at the later articles of the Creed. At present I will ask the reader to accompany me in considering it as a point depending upon faith for its full understanding and acceptance. I have represented it as a matter of historical certainty, and as a matter, therefore, with which opponents must in some manner deal, that the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth from the beginning until now have undoubtedly attributed to their Master a unique position, which they have defined by assigning to Him the title of *the Lord*; but it is none the less true that the acknowledgment and full reception of that title rest not upon history, nor upon reason, but upon faith. This is in accordance with those striking words of St. Paul, *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*.<sup>1</sup> And this again is in harmony with that passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, wherein, after speaking of the humiliation of Jesus Christ, the Apostle writes, that *God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*.<sup>2</sup> Which solemn doctrinal statements seem to find their justification and their echo in that Vision of the Word of God, which was vouchsafed to St. John, and in which he saw one who had *on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords*.<sup>3</sup>

In order to apprehend the meaning of the term *Lord*, as applied by Christian faith to Jesus Christ, it is necessary to examine the sense in which the word was used in those Scriptures, and in the language of that religion, with which the first preachers of Christ were familiar.

In a preceding paragraph are quoted the words, *Ye call Me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am*.<sup>4</sup> If this the Creed that the congregational phrases are dropped, and each individual worshipper utters his individual profession of faith. This point has already been noted in p. 14.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Philip. ii. 9-11.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xix, 16.

<sup>4</sup> St. John xiii. 13.

passage stood alone it might not be necessary to lay any special stress upon the word *Lord*; it might be maintained that it was not more than a synonym for Master or for Teacher, that it was used as the disciples of Socrates could have used it in addressing him. I say *might*, for it is evident that there is at least a hint of a very vast distance between the disciples and Him who used the language quoted; this hint is strongly emphasised and enforced by the words, *for so I am*; there is no hesitation, no shadow of apology for accepting the title of honour, as though a doubt might possibly cross the mind of Peter, or James, or John whether in reality their leader was more than an elder brother, more than *primus inter pares*; or if something more, still not of necessity, and by confession of all, immeasurably above the rest. The uniform gentleness and modesty of the Lord's character renders this quiet assumption of superiority, and the ready acceptance of the claim by the disciples, all the more remarkable—almost inexplicable, except upon the supposition of the superiority being real, palpable, undeniable. But whatever might be the interpretation of such words as those used by Christ if they had stood by themselves, we do not depend upon such interpretation. For it must be remembered that the term *Lord* had for the Jews of the time of Christ, and therefore for Jewish Christians, a high and technical meaning. Jewish veneration and piety had in reading their sacred Scriptures substituted for the unspeakable Name one which might be more freely used. In the Septuagint *the Lord* was the translation of *Jehovah*; as in the Vulgate and the English Bible to this very day. And though it need not be maintained, and is not true, that whenever a Jew used the word which we translate *Lord* he intended to identify the person so designated with *Jehovah*, still it can scarcely be doubted that in assigning to Jesus Christ the emphatic name of *the Lord*, using it as they did in an unqualified sense, the disciples must have had in mind the usage of the Old Testament Scriptures and their own ordinary phraseology; they must have perceived at least how high a character was thus assigned by implication to Jesus Christ. Which view of the case will perhaps appear still clearer in the

light of certain words of St. Paul: *To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him.*<sup>1</sup> The unity of the Lordship of Christ is here placed on almost, if not quite, the same level, as the unity of God the Father; one Father, one Lord Jesus Christ—the two truths appear to stand like the two independent piers of a bridge, resting upon the same bed of rock and carrying the weight of the bridge between them. What kind of Lordship is this?

Undoubtedly, it is a Lordship the truth of which must for our minds rest on faith. The language of the Apostles, the language of Christ Himself, the universal assent of the early Church, the voice of Councils claiming the promise of the Holy Ghost, the answer of what may be called the universal Christian conscience, all point to a supernatural, and immeasurable, a transcendent meaning of the word Lord, as applied to Jesus Christ. Upon the acceptance or rejection of the word in its fulness of meaning depends the answer to that question which Jesus once asked His disciples, *What think ye of Christ?*<sup>2</sup> The word may be said to be another and a condensed form of the doctrine of the Incarnation, with which we shall be more particularly engaged in a following chapter. If Jesus Christ was what Strauss, and Renan, and such like critics would make Him out to have been, He may have been a remarkable and wonderful man—He may conceivably, even confessedly, have been the most remarkable and the most wonderful man whom the earth has seen—but He could not be *our Lord* in the sense of the Apostles' Creed. If He was what St. Peter, and St. John, and St. Paul, and St. Augustine, and Venerable Bede, and millions of holy men and women living and departed have believed Him, felt Him, even (as they would say) known Him to be, then the confession of Him as 'our Lord' would be for them at once the simplest expression of faith and the truest expression of allegiance.

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This chapter may suitably be closed by a few remarks upon

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxii. 42.

the diffusion and confessedly powerful influence of the Christian Creed as depending upon the character of Jesus Christ Himself. Gibbon, in his famous chapter on the progress of the Christian religion, enumerates (as is well known) five causes by which, as he says, the growth of the Christian Church was 'most effectually favoured and assisted.' The inflexible zeal of the Christians; the doctrine of a future life; the miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive Church; the pure and austere morals of the Christians; and the union and discipline of the Christian republic. Concerning these causes, probably no one will be disposed to say that they did not exist, or that they were not active and efficient. Sir James Mackintosh remarks: 'The causes assigned for the diffusion of Christianity must, no doubt, have contributed to it materially; but I doubt whether he (Gibbon) saw them all.' May we not safely go beyond this, and say that the causes assigned by Gibbon are in truth auxiliary causes, but that the cause of causes, the mainspring, the heart, the life of the movement, is omitted altogether? It is somewhat as if a man should account for the good action of a clock by attributing it to five principal causes: the arrangement of the wheels, the clever construction of the pendulum, the constant oiling of the machinery, the careful levelling of the plane upon which it stands, and the skill of the man who has charge of the clock. All very true causes to be assigned for the satisfactory performance of the clock; but what of the mainspring? surely to omit that is to omit the prime mover of the whole.

One may say of all secondary causes something like that which Carlyle has said concerning the sword of Mahomet: 'Much has been said of Mahomet's propagating his religion by the sword. It is no doubt far nobler what we have to boast of the Christian religion, that it propagated itself peaceably in the way of preaching and conviction. Yet withal, if we take this for an argument of the truth or falsehood of a religion, there is a radical mistake in it. The sword indeed; but where will you get your sword! Every new opinion, at its starting, is precisely in a *minority of one*. . . . You must first get your sword.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Lectures on Heroes*, p. 98.



Yes, there is a radical mistake in Gibbon's view; and the mistake consists in omitting the motive power, without which there is nothing to which his auxiliary causes can be regarded as auxiliary. The motive power is to be found in the person and character of Jesus Christ. *I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.* I am not for the moment considering whether the early Christians, or Christians in any age of the Church, have been right in making this profession of faith and taking it for the principle of their lives; but it may be asserted, beyond the possibility of doubt, that their life-principle has been this and nothing else. Belief in Jesus Christ as a Divine person, belief in His mission to mankind, belief in Him as the minister and the demonstration of the love of God, together with personal love and affection and gratitude towards Him grounded upon such belief—these have ever constituted the spring of Christian life, and have been the chief reason why the Christian faith has been propagated from one human heart to another as by a magnetic influence.

Let me call St. Paul as a witness. His letters abound with passages which might be taken in evidence; but I will cite only one. *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*<sup>1</sup> A grand expansion this, but only an expansion, of the phrase, *I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.* It is clear that St. Paul's method of propagating the Gospel and of building up the Church was based upon the person and character of Jesus Christ.

The words of Polycarp, already quoted, 'How can I speak evil of my King, who saved me?' testify that the martyr of

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. iii. 14-19.



Smyrna saw things in much the same light as that in which they presented themselves to St. Paul, and indeed to all the Apostles. The heathen, even the highly educated heathen, described the attitude of Christians as obstinacy;<sup>1</sup> and in one sense it was so; the Christian believers were obstinate to the death, but it was the obstinacy of men who had seen Christ and could not deny Him. His person and character had possessed their whole souls; their present was joyous, because they believed in what He had said and done; their future was bright, because they believed that they would for ever be with Him. No wonder that such faith and such enthusiasm were a lever strong enough to move the world.

Let it be added that the faith of Paul and Polycarp and the early saints is not a curiosity to be gazed at and wondered at in a museum of Christian antiquities, but that it is a living thing in the nineteenth century. Amid all doubts and difficulties, and the oppositions of science, and the direct attacks upon the faith, and the strife of tongues, there is a work for Christ going on comparable with that of any preceding age; and there is the same belief in Him, as the *only Son of God and our Lord*, animating the minds both of the simple and of the most educated and learned, which has been manifested in all ages since Christ was upon earth. Christians feel sure that this will continue to be so, because they know that Jesus Christ said that He would found His Church upon a rock, and that the gates of Hell should not prevail against it; but besides this, they may bear in mind, and it is my purpose to suggest, that even upon principles of ordinary reasoning it seems unlikely that they who endeavour to overthrow the faith will succeed. It is not as though it depended upon grounds of philosophy or argument; such grounds may easily grow weak or require shifting; it depends upon a person. We do not so

<sup>1</sup> Thus Marcus Aurelius writes, 'What a soul that is which is ready, if at any moment it must be separated from the body, and ready either to be extinguished or dispersed or continue to exist; but so that this readiness comes from a man's own judgment, *not from mere obstinacy, as with the Christians*, but considerably and with dignity, and in a way to persuade another, without tragic show.'—*Thoughts of the Emperor M. Aurelius*, xi. § 3. (Long's translation.) It is remarkable that this is the only place in which the Emperor refers to Christians.

much believe in Christianity as in Christ. The figure of Christ can scarcely be obliterated from the history of the world ; all other propositions are (as it were) corollaries to the one grand truth, that the Son of God has been with us in the flesh, and that Jesus Christ is He. It is too late to prove that this truth which so many souls have received and lived upon, is no truth after all.



## CHAPTER IV

### ARTICLE III

WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST, BORN  
OF THE VIRGIN MARY

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*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the  
Highest shall overshadow thee ; therefore also that holy thing  
which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

ST. LUKE i. 35.

THE CREED OF AQUILEIA.

CIRC. A.D. 390.

1. *Credo in Deum Patrem Omnipotentem, invisibilem  
et impassibilem ;*
2. *Et in Jesum Christum, unicum Filium ejus ;  
Dominum nostrum ;*
3. *Qui natus est de Spiritu Sancto,  
Ex Mariâ Virgine ;*
4. *Crucifixus sub Pontio Pilato, et sepultus ;*
5. *Descendit in inferna ;  
Tertiâ die resurrexit a mortuis ;*
6. *Ascendit in Cælos ;  
Sedet ad dexteram Patris ;*
7. *Inde venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos ;*
8. *Et in Spiritu Sancto ;*
9. *Sanctam Ecclesiam ;*
10. *Remissionem peccatorum ;*
11. *Hujus carnis resurrectionem.*

*Harmonia Symbolica, p. 26.*



## CHAPTER IV.

## ARTICLE III.

WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST, BORN OF THE  
VIRGIN MARY. (H., F.)

THIS Article of the Creed manifestly lies to a great extent in the region of faith. Reason cannot deal with it. History cannot do much more than touch the fringe of it. Nevertheless, there is a distinct historical element which should not be neglected; it is well in all such cases to see how far the evidence of history will carry us; we shall more clearly appreciate the superhuman features of the Creed, when we have clearly satisfied our minds as to those which are simply human.

It will be perceived without difficulty, that the article may be reduced to human proportions and invested with a purely historical character by the mere process of omission of a few words.

If we write it thus, 'who was . . . born of . . . Mary,' the statement becomes one which probably the most sceptical would at once accept as true. What it would mean would be, that He, whom we know, and whom all history knows, as Jesus Christ, or, if the title be preferred, as Jesus of Nazareth, was the son of a woman known by the name of Mary. No great importance can be attached to the question what the name of our own Lord's mother was; but it would be a mere craze of scepticism to doubt, that it was the name by which she is described in the Gospels and by which alone she has ever been known to history. It was a not uncommon name; there are several other persons mentioned in the New Testament who bore it;<sup>1</sup> it had been a known and favourite name with the

<sup>1</sup> Acts xii. 12; Rom. xvi. 6.

Israelitish people since the days when it was borne by Miriam the sister of Moses, for Miriam and Mary are the same name. I believe that no doubt has been suggested even by the greatest of doubters upon this point.

But it may be well to go a step beyond the mere name of the Lord's mother, while dealing with her as an historical person. She comes before us in the Gospels several times in a manner so simple and natural, that it is difficult not to believe, or even to feel quite assured, that we are reading an actual narrative of an actual person. Take for example the story of the visit to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old, the loss of the child on the journey home, the finding of Him in the temple amongst the doctors, the mother's rebuke, and the submissive return with Joseph and Mary to Nazareth. *Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. . . . And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.*<sup>1</sup> Take again the story of the marriage in Cana of Galilee, to which Jesus and His disciples *were called*, and concerning which we read that *the mother of Jesus was there.*<sup>2</sup> Once more, take the story of the presence of the Lord's mother at the crucifixion, and the touching words in which the dying sufferer committed her to the care of St. John. *Woman, behold thy son.*<sup>3</sup> These narratives have every attribute of genuineness and truth; it would be difficult for any unprejudiced person to doubt that they correspond to actual facts. On the whole, the personality of Mary the mother of Jesus, independently of all religious doctrine and belief connected with her, and independently of all controversies which have grown out of such doctrine and belief, is as firmly established and as indubitable as that of any man or woman whose name has floated down upon the stream of time.

One further historical step is possible. The mother of the Lord appears once, and once only, in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. In the account of the earliest recorded meeting, after the Ascension, of those who professed allegiance to Him

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke ii. 48, 51.

<sup>2</sup> St. John ii. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xix. 26.

who had been crucified six weeks before, we are told that *these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.*<sup>1</sup> This record is found in a book attributed, and (as the judgment of the best critics would seem to shew) rightly attributed, to the Evangelist St. Luke, a very careful historian, as we shall presently have to observe more particularly, and one who could scarcely have made a mistake upon such a point. Moreover, the fact recorded is in itself intrinsically probable. The followers of the Lord would not be likely to have at once lost sight of His mother. Whatever might be the facts concerning the life and death and alleged resurrection of Jesus Christ (and with these I am not at present engaged, they will come under notice subsequently), His friends and disciples would certainly hold in high honour His mother, if she were living, as there is no reason to doubt that she was. Consequently, we seem to be safe in concluding, as a simple fact of history, that Mary the mother of Jesus Christ survived Him and was in familiar communication for some time—it does not appear how long—with those who were known as His disciples.

All which agrees with the testimony borne by St. John, or the author of the fourth Gospel, to the history of Mary at the crucifixion, to which reference has been already made. That reference had for its purpose the mere emphasising the personality of the Lord's mother; but the passage of St. John's Gospel may rightly be quoted as proving, that Mary was for a time the companion of the Apostles, and that therefore she had the opportunity of giving information concerning her Son which none other could give. This is an important consideration in connection with the article of the Creed now under discussion. The passage is as follows: *When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His Mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*<sup>2</sup> If there ever was a plain historical statement, it may be alleged that this is one. Nothing special is made to

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xix. 26, 27.

hang upon it; no conceivable purpose can be assigned for inserting it, if it were not simply true; even if St. John were not the real author of the Gospel, as there is every reason to believe that he was, still it is difficult to believe that the statement could have been founded upon anything else, except a generally diffused knowledge amongst the early Christians that the mother of Jesus after His crucifixion became the adopted mother of St. John and the inmate of his home.

Legend and invention have been busy, as we know too well, with the history of our Lord's mother. It must be confessed that there is much poetical beauty in the fables, which the loving zeal of Christian hearts have woven for the illustration and glorification of her life and death; but in reality there is nothing outside the Gospels and the book of the Acts of the Apostles, which has any claim to authenticity; and with the brief incidental records there found we must rest content. The absence of her name from later history may excite surprise and may tempt explanation; explanation however must be purely speculative; we *know* nothing; but so far as our present purpose is concerned, there is no reason why we should speculate or desire to know more than we do. Nevertheless it is right and wise to cling earnestly to the historical statement, that the mother of the Lord was in the beginning of Church history intimately associated with His disciples, and to the reasonable inference, that they had opportunities of talking with her concerning her Blessed Son and the history of His early days. For this enjoyment of her society has manifestly an important bearing upon the miraculous portion of the article with which we are now engaged; the assertion of the Virgin birth, if not in reality true, could scarcely have been accepted while the mother was alive to contradict it; if the assertion was made, as it seems to have been, in the earliest times, there is at least a fair presumption that it was made with the Blessed Virgin's knowledge and assent.

This being so, we may perhaps extend our historical foundation, and make it the partial support of somewhat more of the article than the meagre selection with which we have been hitherto dealing. It has been asserted that the statement in



the Creed that Jesus Christ was born of Mary must be accepted even by the most sceptical as a plain historical truth; and though it is impossible to deal precisely in the same tone with that other part of the article, which alleges the supernatural character of the birth, still the preceding observations concerning the historical notices of our Lord's mother may help us to advance some few and useful steps, towards the reception of the supernatural circumstances of the birth as true.

For the following question naturally suggests itself. If the assertion of the extraordinary character of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ be regarded as in any way resting upon historical foundations—that is, upon human testimony—by whom could such testimony be given? The answer is obvious. By one person only, namely, by the mother herself. Then did she give such testimony?

This latter question does not admit of any absolute answer. From the nature of the case, we could not expect that it should. Nevertheless an interesting approximation may be made, which to many minds may possibly appear to be satisfactory, and at all events sound as far as it goes. In order to arrive at such approximation, let us examine the manner in which the birth of our Lord is dealt with by the four Evangelists.

The miraculous birth is recorded by St. Matthew and St. Luke, not by St. Mark and St. John. Let us notice how the opening of Gospel history is treated by the latter two Evangelists, who (as should be noticed) omit not only the supernatural circumstances of the birth, but the birth altogether. It is an obvious and specious objection to the miraculous birth to say, that two out of four Evangelists have recorded nothing about it; and it is easy to argue, that the omission made by two of the books put in as evidence is more weighty than the assertions made by the other two, since these assertions may be supposed to represent the pious accretions of later times. Let us see how this argument will stand, when carefully examined.

First for St. Mark. The second Gospel opens with the title, *The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.*<sup>1</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark i. 1.



then goes on to identify the subject of the history with Him who was spoken of by the prophet Malachi, and whose way was in some mysterious manner to be prepared before Him. John the Baptist is identified as the promised forerunner, and preparer of the way, of this great Son of God. And when we arrive, as we almost immediately do, at the introduction of Jesus, who *came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan*,<sup>1</sup> it is for the purpose of hearing that, on coming out of the water, the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descended upon Him, while *there came a voice from Heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*.<sup>2</sup> Now it is manifestly impossible to make anything out of the omission of the miraculous birth from a Gospel, which enters upon its subject in such a manner as this. A modern historian would doubtless think it strange or impossible to adopt such a course; but when the birth itself is omitted—the record being in fact manifestly fragmentary, a collection of memoirs rather than a systematic biography—it is unreasonable to draw any conclusion against the miraculous birth, unless it can be alleged that the general character of the record is of such a kind, that the introduction of the story would have been inconsistent with St. Mark's general tone and tenour. Such an allegation cannot reasonably be suggested. No one can read the opening of the Gospel to which reference has already been made, or any other portion of it, and then maintain that the insertion of the story of the supernatural birth would have seemed strange. The reader may wonder that the birth was omitted; but he cannot possibly say that he feels sure, or even thinks it highly probable, that if the story of the birth had been told by St. Mark, it would have been free from the miraculous character attributed to it by St. Matthew and St. Luke.

Secondly, all that has been said concerning St. Mark applies, with even increased force, to St. John. Let the reader notice the opening of the fourth Gospel, as he has already been asked to notice that of the second. Here also

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark i. 11.

the birth into the world is simply and absolutely omitted. Instead of it we have the wonderful outburst of mysterious revelation, with which every reader of the New Testament is familiar. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.*<sup>1</sup> Now, it will be observed that my present purpose is not to explain or comment upon this remarkable passage. Neither are the questions of authorship, of date, of interpretation, at this time before us. The only point to be considered is this, whether the Gospel which records that *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, so that we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,*<sup>2</sup> was likely to contain an account of Jesus of Nazareth being born as other men are born into this world. As a matter of fact, the birth is omitted altogether, as has been already noticed; but can it be seriously maintained, that the omission in any way prejudices the truth of the miraculous story? The question of the moment, it will be observed, is not whether the story is in reality true; but whether the probability of its truth is in any degree diminished by the fact, that it is not contained in the fourth Gospel. It is confidently suggested and urged, that the probability is not diminished in the smallest conceivable degree.

We may pass, therefore, from the two Gospels which omit the birth entirely, to the two which record it, and that with the addition of a supernatural circumstance.

The story of the Lord's birth in Bethlehem is given by St. Matthew in a simple, almost oracular form, without any supporting testimony, any collateral circumstances, any opportunity for testing its truth. The record is abundantly sufficient for believers, and interesting as shewing how possible it was for a Hebrew disciple in the earliest times to recognise in Jesus Christ the fulfilment of ancient prophecy,

<sup>1</sup> St. John i. 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> St. John i. 14.

and to recommend Him on that ground to his countrymen as the promised Messiah, the Son of David, the consolation of Israel for whom they had been waiting so long and so wearily. In fact, if we regard the first Gospel in the light in which there is every reason to believe that it ought to be regarded, namely, as specially addressed to Jewish converts to the faith of Christ, it may be said that the birth is related exactly in that manner which the needs of the case required. A Jewish convert, who had accepted the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, would thankfully receive the testimony that He was born not in Nazareth, but in Bethlehem, where *the chief priests and scribes*,<sup>1</sup> when consulted, told Herod the king that *Christ should be born*; and also they would readily perceive in the birth, regarded in that supernatural form in which it was believed by the Church, the fulfilment of what *was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*.<sup>2</sup> But, regarded simply from an historical point of view, it may be at once conceded that the testimony of St. Matthew is not nearly so important as that of St. Luke; as Evangelists within the Church, as men writing (under the influence of the Holy Ghost) documentary records, which should meet varied wants and speak with mutually supporting voices to all sorts and conditions of men through all time, no comparison ought to be instituted between one and another; the four Evangelists are as the four rivers of Eden, which, after all, were only one, *parted into four heads*; <sup>3</sup> or they are as the four living creatures of the Apocalypse, which all worshipped before the same throne and all joined in saying, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty*; <sup>4</sup> they are joined together by God, and man cannot, and must not, put them asunder. But, for the purpose of historical evidence—for the purpose, in fact, of such an investigation as that in which the reader is invited to join in this chapter—it is no affront to St. Matthew's Gospel

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. ii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. ii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. i. 22, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. iv. 8.

to say, that it stands upon a different level from that which must be assigned to that of St. Luke.

Let us proceed, then, lastly, to examine the story of our Lord's birth as given by St. Luke. And, in doing this, some introductory remarks must be made upon St. Luke's character and qualifications as an historian.

Speaking generally, it may be asserted that St. Luke has special claims to be regarded as an historian in the modern sense of the title, and according to modern requirements. He is sensible, for example, of the importance of dates and of giving the means of verifying them. He begins his Gospel with a careful note of time. *There was in the days of Herod the king of Judæa.*<sup>1</sup> Again, in the second chapter there is a still more distinct note. *It came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*<sup>2</sup> About this statement of St. Luke there has been much controversy, which it would be inconvenient to reproduce in this place; it may suffice to say that whereas, at one time, opponents of the accuracy of Scripture history were wont to point to this passage as containing a chronological error, the most recent investigations have turned the tables, and have made it as nearly demonstrable as can be, that St. Luke's statement is not open to impeachment.<sup>3</sup> Once more, we have a careful note of time in the third chapter. *In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the High Priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.*<sup>4</sup> In which passage it may be well to remark, that the mention of two High Priests is contrary to the principle that there

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke ii. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> An account of the controversy may be found in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. *Cyrenius*.

<sup>4</sup> St. Luke iii. 1, 2.



could properly be but one; nevertheless, the reference to both Annas and Caiaphas corresponds to what we know to have been the fact, namely, that Annas had been irregularly deprived by the civil power, and that Caiaphas had been substituted for him. Now, the man who took care to express himself in the manner exhibited by the three passages which have been quoted, evidently knew what historical accuracy means. He seems almost prodigal in the opportunities which he gives his critics of detecting him in mistakes, if mistakes should be made. It may be stated, moreover, with some confidence, that he has not yet been caught tripping; but even if he had been—if it should have been proved, beyond reasonable doubt, that in some historical detail the author of the third Gospel had made a statement or statements shewing him not to be free from the fallibility to which the greatest historians are subject—the force of the present argument would not be wholly destroyed. The point which it is desired to establish is, not that St. Luke never made a mistake as to historical details—though it may be questioned whether any mistakes have been proved against him—but that he evidently took every pains to avoid mistake, that he had the sense of accuracy keenly developed, and that, therefore, when he makes a plain statement concerning a subject which he had the opportunity of investigating, he is not likely to be wrong.

In the case of St. Luke, however, we do not depend solely upon the indications of care and accuracy which we find in his Gospel. It so happens—or rather, I will be bold to say, it has been so ordered by the providence of God—that we have the means of testing the qualifications of this Evangelist to perform the duties of an historian in a most unexpected and most conclusive manner. The accuracy of a writer, who describes an ancient building or the habits of an animal, or the manners and customs of a country, can sometimes be tested, centuries after the writer himself has passed away, by the survival of the things described, and the possibility of comparing the description with the actual things as they still exist. Does not the character of Herodotus very much depend upon a test of this kind? The test of St. Luke's



accuracy, to which reference is here made, is more searching than that which depends upon the description of ancient, but still existing phenomena. I will endeavour to explain what is meant, referring for details to another work.

I shall assume that the author of the third Gospel is also the author of the book of the Acts of the Apostles. This appears to have been recognised as a fact in all ages, and to be admitted by the most recent criticism. In reality it is difficult to suggest any reasonable doubt.<sup>1</sup>

This being so, any internal evidence, which proves accuracy and capacity as an historian in the case of the author of the Acts of the Apostles, proves the same qualities in the case of the author of the third Gospel. I shall speak of the author of either work as St. Luke.

Now, in the closing portion of the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke gives us a remarkable account of a voyage and shipwreck, in which he was himself engaged and the circumstances of which he has recorded. This account has been examined with almost microscopic observation by a practical seaman, who added to the qualification of practical seamanship many other qualities necessary for successfully conducting the

<sup>1</sup> In the concluding portion of the last work published by Bishop Lightfoot is the following passage :

‘In a former volume M. Renan declared his opinion that the author of the Third Gospel and the Acts was verily and indeed (*bien réellement*) Luke, a disciple of St. Paul. In the first instalment of his work he condemns as untenable the view that the first person plural of the later chapters is derived from some earlier document inserted by the author, on the ground that these portions are identical in style with the rest of the work. Such an expression of opinion, proceeding from a not too conservative critic, is significant; and *this view of the authorship, I cannot doubt, will be the final verdict of the future, as it has been the unbroken tradition of the past.*—*Essays on ‘Supernatural Religion,’* p. 291.

In the same volume Bishop Lightfoot remarks, that ‘no ancient work affords so many tests of veracity [as the Acts of the Apostles]; for no other has such numerous points of contact in all directions with contemporary history, politics, and topography, whether Jewish or Greek or Roman.’ Speaking also of Mr. Wood’s recent discoveries in Ephesus, the Bishop adds, ‘With these facts in view we are justified in saying, that ancient literature has preserved no picture of the Ephesus of Imperial times—the Ephesus which has been unearthed by the sagacity and perseverance of Mr. Wood—comparable for its lifelike truthfulness to the narrative of St. Paul’s sojourn.’

examination. The result is contained in the 'Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul,' by the late James Smith of Jordan Hill.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible for me to express in a few words all that I think concerning this most interesting and most precious volume. I would hope that it is familiar to many of those who may read this reference to it. Suffice it to say, that the result of the minute and careful investigation of every sentence, and nearly every word of St. Luke's narrative is to prove, beyond almost the possibility of doubt, that St. Luke was at once a most careful observer and a most accurate and conscientious recorder of what he observed.

Let the reader notice the peculiar and striking force of the argument here advanced. The verification and explanation of St. Luke's narrative depend not upon one or two happy coincidences, but upon a network of facts of the most varied kind—the direction of winds, the strength of currents, the build and management of ancient ships, and many other things—and in the hands of an expert the verification and explanation depending upon these varied circumstances are complete and convincing. By a criticism of this kind we pass by one step over the eighteen intervening centuries; and we are able to say, with a sense of absolute security, that the man who in the anxiety and weariness of a tempestuous voyage, terminating in a wreck and utter loss of the ship, was able to observe and record with such demonstrated accuracy the incidents of his adventure, must be worthy of credit in any case in which he pledges himself to have carefully investigated the facts which he reports as true. It is incredible that an author should write two books, and that in one of them he should prove himself beyond doubt to be an historian of singular discernment and accuracy, while in the other he is a mere retailer of fables. The only way to avoid the force of this argument is to deny that the same man wrote the two books; but, in the case with which we are concerned, it has already been said that this course can scarcely be adopted with success.

<sup>1</sup> It is one of the satisfactions of my life to reflect that I was the means of persuading Messrs. Longman to produce a new edition of this remarkable book in the year 1880,

Crediting, therefore, St. Luke, as author of the third Gospel, with the character for care and accuracy which undeniably belongs to the author of the Acts of the Apostles, we may note what he claims for himself in his preface, that is, in the opening verses of his Gospel.

He first rehearses that many have taken in hand to write an orderly account of the things which were surely believed amongst the disciples of Christ, or (as we should say) in the Church. He says that the authors in question undertook to write down these things as they were delivered to them by eye-witnesses. Then he proceeds to state that he himself has thought good, for the sake of a certain honourable person, named Theophilus, in whose welfare for some reason (not explained) he seems to have taken a special interest, to become one of these historians. He clearly implies that he was in a position to take rank with them; that he had equal advantages; and he asserts distinctly that he had had *perfect understanding of all things from the very first*.<sup>1</sup> The general impression made by the preface must be, that St. Luke considered himself to have exceptional advantages for ascertaining the truth, that he had conscientiously used these advantages, and that his Gospel was the result of careful inquiry and investigation. Can the narrative of the Lord's birth put forward by such a person, with such an explanation of his position and purpose, be lightly set aside?<sup>2</sup>

Let it be further observed that St. Luke does not profess anything like novelty with regard either to his Gospel in general, or to the story of the Nativity in particular. His intention, as announced by himself, is to establish the faith

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> An additional proof of the knowledge and accuracy of St. Luke may be found in his geographical notices. 'In general,' writes Dr Edersheim, 'the Mishnah divided Judæa proper into three parts: mountain, shephelah, (the country along the sea-shore), and valley, to which we must add the city of Jerusalem as a separate district. And here we have another striking evidence of the authenticity of the New Testament, and especially of the writings of St. Luke. Only one intimately acquainted with the state of matters at the time would, with the Rabbis, have distinguished Jerusalem as a district separate from all the rest of Judæa, as St. Luke markedly does on several occasions: St. Luke v. 17; Acts i. 8; x. 39.'—*Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 73.

of Theophilus in those things in which he had already been *instructed*,<sup>1</sup> or catechised. Consequently there is no reason to suppose that the account of the Lord's birth came upon Theophilus as a novelty. He might possibly, or even probably, have repeated, in preparation for his baptism, such a symbol as the Apostles' Creed. He might already have been taught that Jesus Christ was 'born of the Virgin Mary.' What St. Luke desired was that all that he knew about the Lord Jesus should be set before him *in order*; <sup>2</sup> that he should be taught the things, which the Church believed, more accurately than ordinary disciples, or than he himself understood them when a catechumen; that he should have the benefit of the knowledge possessed by his friend and teacher, St. Luke, with regard to a number of matters of deep interest to every intelligent disciple's mind. Is it probable, that, having such a purpose, and having made such a profession of the same, St. Luke would have inserted the story of the Virgin birth, if he had not satisfied himself that it was true?

There is another circumstance to be noted concerning St. Luke, which is of first-rate importance with regard to the matter now under consideration.

St. Luke, as we know from a passing notice in St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, was by profession a physician. *Luke, the beloved physician*,<sup>3</sup> is St. Paul's own affectionate description of his companion. And if any one should feel disposed to doubt—though in reality there is no ground for doubting—the identity of the Luke here referred to with the author of the third Gospel, it may be said that in this case we can afford to dispense with external evidence of the fact that the third Gospel was written by a physician. For when once the suggestion is made, internal evidence of the most curious and convincing kind springs up abundantly in proof of the truth of the suggestion. The evidence depends upon the use of technical medical language, and upon modes of expression which none but a medical man would have been likely to use. The discovery of this feature of St. Luke's Gospel was first made many

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke i. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Coloss. iv. 14.



years ago, and has recently been expanded so as to occupy a whole volume.<sup>1</sup> I shall content myself with assuming a result, of the truth of which it is impossible for any one who examines the evidence not to be convinced. But if the author of the third Gospel were indeed *Luke, the beloved physician*, let the reader consider how much weight is thereby given to the record in that Gospel of the Lord's nativity. Certainly St. Luke was writing on his own subject; he would not lightly make a statement upon such a subject, unless he had persuaded himself that it was true; he would not be likely to be satisfied with an im-

<sup>1</sup> *The Medical Language of St. Luke, a Proof from Internal Evidence that the Gospel according to St. Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were Written by the Same Person, and that the Writer was a Medical Man.* By the Rev. W. K. Hobart, LL.D., ex-scholar Trinity College, Dublin (1882). Dr. Hobart refers to a paper in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for June, 1841, as the only notice of the subject with which he is acquainted. He appears not to be aware that it has been discussed also with much effect by Mr. Smith of Jordanhill, who also refers to the paper in the *Gentleman's Magazine* as the original source of the suggestion. The number of technical medical terms occurring in St. Luke's Gospel has been much enlarged by Dr. Hobart, who gives in his index a list of some four hundred words, which 'are either peculiar to St. Luke, or which, though not peculiar, are yet for the most part more frequently employed by him than by any other New Testament writer.' I may add that it is not merely the use of medical terms, but the manner of dealing with medical subjects, which brings home to the mind the fact that the third Gospel was written by a physician. Take one instance: St. Mark tells us (chap. v.) that the woman who had an issue of blood twelve years *had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.* Compare this severe account of medical treatment with the corresponding passage in St. Luke (chap. viii.), who speaks of *a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her money upon physicians, neither could be healed of any.* The same story precisely, but very differently told. St. Mark was not a physician: St. Luke was.

The notion of medical language having been used by St. Luke has been entirely opposed by a writer in the 'Church of England Pulpit' (March 1890). The same writer also denies that St. Luke was a physician at all. The latter assertion seems scarcely to need refutation. With regard to the former, in connection with Dr. Hobart's book, the truth is probably expressed by Dr. Salmon, who writes as follows: 'Dr. Hobart, perhaps, sometimes pushes his argument too far, forgetting that medical writers must employ ordinary as well as technical language, and therefore that every word frequently found in medical books cannot fairly be claimed as a term in which medical writers can be supposed to have an exclusive property. But when every doubtful instance has been struck out of Dr. Hobart's lists, enough remain to establish completely what he desires to prove.'—*Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 173. For my own part I am content to rest the question upon the original paper in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.



palpable tradition, in a matter which came so entirely within his own professional cognisance.

I do not desire to press this argument beyond its due limits. If the impossibility of the miraculous be assumed or admitted, the evidence of an expert, though his witness would be good in an ordinary case, would manifestly have to yield where the miraculous is concerned. On this subject something will be said further on : for the present all that is urged is this, that the evidence of St. Luke cannot lightly be put aside as the mere rehearsal of a popular superstition. Whether the Virgin birth be a literal fact, or whether it was (as some have maintained) a popular mode of ascribing to the Lord a character of exceptional purity, it is certain that that supernatural birth was affirmed at an early period by a man of singular penetration and accuracy, who was a physician by profession, and was also a companion of Apostles. If a man rejects the truth of the Virgin birth, he should at least recognise the singular strength of the testimony upon which the rejected article rests.

Having arrived at this point let us proceed somewhat further in the same direction. It has been noted that St. Luke is the only Evangelist who gives a detailed and circumstantial account of the Lord's birth. Whence did he obtain his materials ?

It is clear that only one person was in a position to give distinct evidence, namely, the mother of the Lord. Did St. Luke hold communication with and receive information from her ? We have no documentary or even traditional proof that he did ; but she was alive, as we have seen, in the early days of the Church, and there is no reason to be alleged why St. Luke, who manifestly knew the value of testimony at first hand, and was specially desirous of being accurate in what he wrote, should not have obtained information from Mary herself. Or even without this supposition of personal inquiry from the Lord's mother, it may well be that St. Luke should have used materials which he knew to have her unique authority. This suggestion I the rather make, because some of the early portions of St. Luke's Gospel have the appearance of being a collection of short narratives, which have been *edited*, as we should say in

modern language, by the Evangelist.<sup>1</sup> But besides the antecedent probability of the supposition, that St. Luke directly or indirectly obtained information from St. Mary, let any candid person read through the Gospel of the Infancy, and see whether it does not here and there exhibit those delicate touches which indicate the mother's hand. Take the following specimens: *Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary His mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be spoken against, (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart.*<sup>2</sup> The mother's touch seems almost palpable in such passages as these: it is difficult to guess from what other source they can have come. The suppositions which have been made in order to account for the miraculous portions of our Lord's history, as accretions due to the loving admiration of disciples and the like, break down entirely in the face of these simple, natural records of the Lord's childhood. But if these records are good evidence of the connection of the Lord's mother with St. Luke's narrative of His early years, they may be taken to connect her also with the story of the Virgin birth; they make it difficult to believe that that story was communicated to St. Luke, and by him registered as an historical fact, without her privity and approval.

We seem, therefore, to have reached this point in the argument concerning the birth of the Lord Jesus, regarded as a fact of history, namely, that we have the Virgin birth attested by a writer, whom upon independent grounds we know to be accurate,

<sup>1</sup> See Schleiermacher's remarks upon St. Luke ii. *Critical Essay on the Gospel of St. Luke.*

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke ii. 19; St. Luke ii. 34, 35; St. Luke ii. 48-51,

conscientious, exact, and singularly competent; while at the same time internal evidence and the reason of the thing combine to make it probable, that the truth of the extraordinary birth attributed to the Lord by the early Church, and made a cardinal article of faith, was attested by the one person who positively knew, namely, the Virgin Mother herself. Nevertheless, it shall be candidly granted that the weight of this article of the Creed ought not to be permitted to rest, and indeed cannot wholly rest, upon historical ground. It must be admitted that in the case of an alleged extraordinary fact, which seems to contradict the general order of nature, we need for the purpose of establishing its place in the Creed something more than an ingenious, even an apparently satisfactory, historical argument. The argument may seem to hold as a matter of logic; but the strangeness of the result may be such as to make people *feel* (if the expression may be permitted) that there is a flaw somewhere; there must be something of the nature of a *dignus vindice nodus*. A miraculous story must not merely stand out clearly on the page of history, free from obvious objections and capable of holding its own as a matter of historical argument, but it must have in the background something which shall produce upon the mind the impression, that the story, though miraculous, is in the highest sense reasonable, and that, the conditions and circumstances being such as they are, there is nothing so strange in the story as to compel us to pronounce it incredible.

Hence, for all important purposes, the question of the truth of the Virgin birth should be tried not in the court of History, but in that of Faith: if History be judge in the court of first instance, Faith must preside in the court of appeal. It is not, as the preceding discussion will have tended to shew, that we need fear an adverse judgment in the former court; but that a judgment given there, without corroboration elsewhere, would be well-nigh if not quite unprofitable for those purposes which induce a Christian to rehearse the Apostles' Creed. It is when we contemplate the Lord, not as Jesus of Nazareth, but as the only Son of God, undertaking a work for mankind which could not have been otherwise performed, becoming *a sacrifice for sin*,

and opening the kingdom of Heaven to all believers, that we begin to realise the propriety of His extraordinary entrance into the world as a man. No one could have said *a priori* what would be the fitting entrance. Given the necessity of a Divine incarnation, no one would venture to assign the conditions to which that incarnation should be subject. The whole transaction is so manifestly and so immeasurably beyond human ken and experience, that it would be the height of presumption even to speculate concerning those conditions; but it may perhaps be urged with some confidence, that when we read of the Son of God visiting us in great humility and being born of a pure Virgin (according to the language of the Collect for Christmas Day), there is something in the announcement which commends it to the general perception and judgment of mankind, as suitable to the supreme character of Him who was thus born into the world.

It may be well, at this point of our discussion, to notice the absence of all reference to this article of the Creed from the Apostolic Epistles.<sup>1</sup> It might possibly be expected by some persons, that we should find reference in these Epistles to all articles of the Creed, and that any article would be regarded as in a certain sense damaged in its reputation by not being found there. It is manifest, however, that it would be rash to form an opinion as to what matters the Epistles ought, or might be expected, to contain; and in reality the omission of all reference to the Virgin birth must appear trifling by the side of the much larger fact of the same class, namely, that the Epistles omit all reference to the whole cycle of our Lord's miracles. This omission is unquestionably very striking. It manifestly does not arise from any fear on the part of the Apostles to press the miracles as an argument of the Lord's divine character, for they constantly and consistently press the miracle of miracles, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; and they habitually

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that reference to the Virgin birth is not wholly absent from the Epistles; and Gal. iv. 4, *God sent forth His Son, made of a woman*, is quoted in support of the suggestion. It is possible that special emphasis was intended to be laid upon the words *made of a woman*; but the point must be regarded as doubtful, and the interpretation is not required by the Apostles' argument.



contemplate Him as ascended into Heaven, and as sitting at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father. No doubt, as Paley observed long ago, the early preachers of Christ did not put forward His miracles as an argument for His doctrines and His divinity, in the manner and degree in which he and some other modern apologists would probably have done had they lived in those times. This, however, is not the point which concerns us in the present argument. What does concern us is this, that for some reason, which need not be sought for just now, if at all, the Apostles did not commonly write concerning the Lord's miracles, of which, nevertheless, they certainly knew as at least having been alleged to have been wrought. St. John had himself recorded some of them, if we assume the author of St. John's Epistles and the author of the fourth Gospel to have been the same person. As, therefore, the absence of reference to miracles in general from the Epistles cannot be held to prove that they were a subsequent addition to the Christian story, so the absence of reference to the Virgin birth cannot be taken as proof, that in the earliest times it was not known and accepted as true by the disciples of Christ.

Nothing has been said hitherto concerning the birth of our Lord in connection with the anticipations of prophecy. In all ages of the Church, the fulfilment of the predictions of the Old Testament in the facts of the New has been dwelt upon with satisfaction by those who have believed that type and shadow, sacrifice and ritual, as well as the more distinct utterances of seers, all pointed to Christ; and the fulfilment of prophecy has been a favourite ground of argument with many Christian apologists. St. Peter seems to encourage such a course when he writes, *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.*<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it has been urged by some in these latter days that there is really no such thing as fulfilment of prophecy, and that in the case of the Virgin birth, as in some other cases, the alleged miraculous event is a figment to which the words of

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. i. 19.



so-called prophecy have given or helped to give rise. It has been suggested also that the Virgin birth is, as it were, a parable of purity, and that reverence for our Lord's character suggested to devout minds the fiction that He was Virgin-born; the fiction in this case being subsequently supported by reference to prophecy, instead of taking its origin therefrom. Neither of these theories squares well with the facts; yet it may be admitted, indeed it is manifest from St. Matthew's Gospel, that a Jew familiar with the ancient Scriptures would catch at any hint, which seemed to refer to the promised and long-expected Messiah; he would rejoice in every gleam of light in the East which seemed to herald the rising sun; and he would naturally, almost spontaneously, connect the Christian belief in Mary's maternal virginity with the brilliant language of the prophet Isaiah. If a person had been born into the world, whose friends and disciples believed that he was indeed divine, and that no human father could claim him as his own, those of his disciples who were taught in the writings of the prophets, and whose turn of mind and thought was such as we know the general turn of the minds and thoughts of devout Jews in the time of our Lord to have been, would not be able to do otherwise than connect their master's birth with the magnificent language of Isaiah which would be familiar to them: *Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel!*<sup>1</sup> Doubtless the early Jewish believers welcomed such evidence of Messiahship; it would be a real help to them, a *light shining in a dark place*. Doubtless, also, in all ages devout believers have regarded the evidence of prophecy in the same way: it may be asserted, without much fear of being wrong, that the same attitude of mind towards prophecy and its fulfilment in Christ will be preserved throughout all time to come. Nor would it be wise to attempt to tie up too tightly the minds of loving disciples, who delight to find in the dealings of God with His Church in olden times the shadows cast before it by the great event of the Advent of Christ. Nevertheless, it may be well to observe, that, by the nature of the case, the fulfilment of prophecy is an obscure and

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah vii. 14.

difficult region, in which ingenious and enthusiastic minds may easily get astray ! and it may be right, therefore, that the safety of Christian truth should not be made to depend too much upon the prophetic argument. This kind of evidence belongs as much to devotional feeling as to logical consequence ; it appeals more strongly to sympathising hearts than to critical, combative brains ; and the faithful believer in Christ may find many a shadow of his dear Master's form upon the pages of the Old Testament, where a faithless eye can discern nothing but a printed text. Perhaps no better illustration of what is here asserted can be found than that which is supplied by the Gospel of St. Matthew itself. Take two examples. Joseph arose and took the young child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt : and was there until the death of Herod : that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, *Out of Egypt have I called My Son.*<sup>1</sup> And again St. Matthew finds in the slaughter of the innocents by Herod a fulfilment of the words of Jeremiah : *In Rama was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*<sup>2 3</sup>

Doubtless the real difficulty in the way of the reception of

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. ii. 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. ii. 18.

<sup>3</sup> In Appendix ix. to his history of the *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Dr. Edersheim gives a 'list of Old Testament Passages Messianically applied in ancient Rabbinic Writings.' 'They amount in all to 456, thus distributed : 75 from the Pentateuch, 243 from the Prophets, and 138 from the Hagiographa, and supported by more than 558 separate quotations from the Rabbinic Writings.' The possibility of making such a collection proves beyond doubt the great extent to which the idea of the connection between the ancient Scriptures and the Messiah had penetrated the Jewish mind. It will be observed that there is no question here raised as to the reasonableness of the Rabbinic views ; in a certain sense the more unreasonable and fanciful the references to Messiah may seem to us, so much the stronger is the evidence of the reality of the idea, or at all events so much the more striking is the fact of Messianic belief having been based upon the Old Testament Scriptures. That the references do in many instances appear unreasonable and fanciful cannot be denied. Take, as an example, the very first produced by Dr. Edersheim : 'In Gen. i. 2 the expression *Spirit of God* is explained as the *Spirit of the King Messiah* with reference to Isaiah xi. 2, and the *moving on the face of the deep* of *repentance* according to Lam. ii. 19.' Doubtless it is strange that an intimation of repentance in connection with the coming of Messiah should be found in connection with Gen. i. 2 ; but the fact proves that somehow the Jewish mind had been educated up to a more or less worthy conception of what the reign of Messiah was to be :

the dogma of the Virgin birth is that it involves the admission of the miraculous; and it may be well to take the opportunity of making some remarks upon this subject, which may be useful also with regard to other articles of the Creed.

It will not be expected, nor would it be convenient, that there should be given in this place a complete treatise on miracles and their credibility. It may perhaps even be doubted whether a complete treatise be possible. The subject is one of profound difficulty, and cannot be treated either briefly or simply. Moreover, it is quite certain that miracles and their credibility present themselves in very different ways to different minds. All that will be attempted in this place will be to deal with the popular objection, which is probably at the root of nine-tenths of the current unbelief in miracles, namely, that we do not see miracles happen. Hume opposed the truth of miracles on the ground that it was contrary to experience that they should happen, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false; therefore it was more probable that the evidence for miracles should be mistaken, than that the alleged miracles should have happened. Paley, on the other hand, urges that in the case of twelve men making a plain assertion concerning a miraculous event, in support of which they were willing to lay down their lives and actually did so, the combined evidence must be regarded as overwhelming, and the *a priori* improbability must give way. Perhaps it may be asserted, that in most minds the question of belief in miracles depends more or less directly upon the judgment formed as to the predominance of this or that side of the argument, which Hume and Paley respectively expounded with rare skill and clearness long ago. But the prominence acquired in later years by the conception of law as governing the universe has tended to strengthen the Humian argument from experience, and in a corresponding degree to weaken the Paleian argument from the strength of testimony. It may be well, therefore, to consider what the legitimate conclusion is from the assertion that we do not see miracles happening. For the purpose of the argument it shall be granted that this is so; that is to say, that modern miracles,

such as those of Notre Dame de Lourdes and the like, are a delusion or mistake of some kind. We shall then have to deal with the inference, that inasmuch as miracles do not happen now, therefore they never did happen. Let us see whether this inference is just, and such as we are compelled to accept.

Its strength depends upon the assumption of what is called the uniformity of nature; a very important principle, and within certain limits a true one. But is it not limited? Is it not capable of demonstration, that, if we go far enough back along the stream of time, we shall come to a point at which action took place upon the earth's surface, of a kind essentially different from that which takes place now—that is to say, a point at which the uniformity of nature is broken? If we go far enough back, we find the globe in a state of fusion from intense heat: whatever may have been the earth's earliest form and whatever the method of its formation, there can be no reasonable doubt as to its having been at one time in a condition of heat such as to render impossible the existence of life, either vegetable or animal, upon its surface. When it had cooled down sufficiently, or, at all events, at a period subsequent to that of intense heat, living forms appeared. Whence did they come? No maxim of science is more generally received, or has been more strengthened under the influence of careful investigation, than that which Harvey enunciated in the words *Omne vivum ex vivo*; but by hypothesis there was, at the primitive epoch to which we have gone back, no life which could be the origin of other life: whence then did life come? Is it possible to conceive its origin, except according to some law essentially different from any that is now at work? And if so, it would seem to be no misuse of the term, if we should describe the entrance of life upon the scene as miraculous. If by miraculous we mean that which is not included in the ordinary laws of matter, then undoubtedly this entrance of life may be properly so described.

Therefore it would seem that the miraculous, the breach of the uniformity of nature, is not impossible *per se*, not impossible like the breach of a law of geometry or of number, or of a law of morals, but only so improbable as to make it necessary that



the circumstances of any given case, and the evidence by which it is supported, should be carefully investigated, and should be adjudged as the result of investigation to be worthy of the conclusion drawn.

Hence it is urged that in considering such events as the coming of Christ into the world, His life and deeds while in the world, and His departure from it, which we shall have to consider subsequently, we cannot make the credibility of the facts asserted depend upon the remark, however true in its way, that practically we do not see miracles happen. Whether in the history of the Lord Jesus Christ things happened which ordinarily do not happen, must be considered partly with reference to the evidence offered, but partly also with reference to the supernatural character assigned to the Lord Jesus, and to the work which He came to do. We cannot discuss either the Gospels or the Creeds as mere dry, historical documents; the matters concerned touch the deepest feelings and hopes of the human heart, and the most mysterious elements of human life. Christ appears as the Redeemer of man's soul from the power of sin, the healer of all his infirmities, the opener of the gates of Heaven: the reality and credibility of the character which Christ assumed depend, not merely upon historical evidence, but also upon the internal evidence of the adaptation of that character to the wants and experience of man. As a matter of fact, the claims of Christ as a deliverer, a saviour, a lord and king, as the answer to all the aspirations of the human heart, have been extensively, though (it must be acknowledged) not universally, recognised in all ages of Christendom; and it is impossible to consider any extraordinary circumstances, alleged in connection with Him and His earthly history, apart from this fundamental distinction between Himself and any other of the children of men. If the moral needs of man render an Incarnation credible, the alleged circumstances of that Incarnation may well claim to be believed, or at least to be respectfully considered, and to be discussed upon principles somewhat different from those which are applicable to ordinary history.

This view of the case will be strengthened, if we consider



that portion of the third article of the Creed, which, though it occurs first, has been reserved to the last in the order of our discussion, and which is comprised in the words, *Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost*.

The mention of the Holy Ghost at this point of the Creed is an anticipation of that which is to follow in due course. We shall hereafter have to deal with the article, *I believe in the Holy Ghost*. Nevertheless, without anticipating the discussion of the full doctrine which the Church holds concerning the third person of the blessed Trinity, it may be possible to say in this place as much as shall be necessary to explain the foundation upon which the belief in the divine conception rests, and the importance of its assertion in this part of the Creed. The Creed does, in fact, merely rehearse the statement made in the Gospel of St. Luke. *The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*<sup>1</sup> These words at once determine the meaning of the article of the Creed, and lift it into the region of faith. They give the divine side of the Virgin birth. The first portion of the article asserts a truth, without which the second could not hold its ground. That second part has been discussed first, because it is nearer to the level of human experience; it has in it a distinctly historical element; it touches the human and the divine simultaneously. But the first part carries us away into another region altogether; there is nothing present but the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost; the only Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, was made man, and this is the way in which the Incarnation took place.

The language of the blessed Virgin in reply to the words of the angel, as above quoted, may suggest to Christians in all ages the spirit in which the message of the Incarnation should be received. They are a model of simplicity and modesty; and though in their full literal sense applicable to the mother of the Lord alone, they are in their tone and spirit suitable to

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke i. 35.

all His disciples. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word.*<sup>1</sup> This is the genuine language of faith. Faith must receive the Incarnation, if it is to be received at all; reason may persuade us that the thing is not incredible, history may attest some of its circumstances, but faith alone can accept the doctrine as that upon which the life of the world and the joy of each human soul depend.

On the whole, this third article of the Creed may be said to be nothing more nor less than a simple presentation, such as we might expect in a baptismal symbol, of the great doctrine of the Incarnation, which runs through the whole of the New Testament, which is foreshadowed by the Old, and which is the foundation of Christendom. It is expressed more fully and more grandly in the Nicene Creed, but the essential substance of the doctrine is all here. It has been noticed and acknowledged, in the discussion of the Virgin birth, that no direct reference is made to it in the Apostolic Epistles; but if we look away from this special aspect of the Incarnation, and look at the Incarnation itself in all its fulness, without reference to the particular manner in which, according to the good providence of God, it became an accomplished fact, we shall perceive that this third article of the Creed does in reality underlie and animate many of the Apostolic utterances. Take as a conspicuous example the following passage of St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, already quoted: *Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself.*<sup>2</sup> The striking language here used must be acknowledged by every one to be not inconsistent with a reception of the third article of the Apostles' Creed. But we may go further than this, and we may say that it is not easy to understand how St. Paul could have written such language, if he had not received that article; at all events, this language of St. Paul is quite as emphatic, though not so historically explicit, concerning the great truth of the Incarna-

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke i. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Philip. ii. 5, 8.

tion, as anything which the Creed contains. And after all, this is the point to which we should look. The Incarnation is the great fundamental fact of revelation; it is that which binds God and man together; it is that upon which the Gospel rests. The Virgin birth is but the means by which the end was accomplished; and if the writings of the Apostles bear, as they do, constant reference direct or indirect to the great truth, that God was made man in the person of Jesus Christ, we need not trouble ourselves concerning the question, why all mention of the manner in which the mighty work was done should have been omitted from those same writings.

Before passing on from this article it may be well to add some remarks concerning the childhood of the Lord Jesus, which may be said to be independent of the question of the Virgin birth, though not independent of His Divine character. There are circumstances connected with His childhood which would be of little or no moment, if He had been a child on exactly the same level with other children, but which become infinitely striking when His Divine character is once recognised.

Observe, in the first place, that there are only two of the Evangelists who tell us anything of the Lord's childhood; and those are just the two who record the Virgin birth, namely St. Matthew and St. Luke. If the Gospels were human inventions, one might be disposed to guess that an historian who described the birth of the Lord as supernatural would also describe the childhood as supernatural, or at all events as exhibiting some extraordinary phenomena. The apocryphal Gospels in fact do this. There is a story, for example, in one of them, of Joseph and Mary being attacked on their way to Egypt by dragons which came out of a cave; but which, when the child Jesus stood before them, adored Him, in fulfilment of the words of the Psalm, *Praise the Lord upon earth, ye dragons and all deeps*.<sup>1</sup> The same story tells us that Jesus said to Joseph and Mary, *Fear not, neither consider that I am a little child: for I always have been and am perfect: it must needs be that the wild beasts of*

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxlviii. 7.

*the woods should be gentle in My presence.*<sup>1</sup> The apocryphal Gospels abound in such stories. But St. Matthew and St. Luke, though they give different pictures of the infancy, agree completely in representing it as a real infancy, with all the weakness and helplessness that belong to that period of human life. Herod tries to kill the infant child, and Joseph and His mother take Him down into Egypt: this is St. Matthew's only contribution to the story of the infancy, and its chief, perhaps its only, importance consists in the witness that it bears to the weakness and helplessness of the Lord's babyhood. No miracle worked to save Him from destruction, no angels commissioned to guard Him from the hand of Herod; but His life preserved by the care of His father and mother, as the life of any other child might have been preserved. The real Gospel of the Infancy, however, is recorded by St. Luke. In this Gospel we find the record of the circumcision, the presentation in the Temple, the going up to Jerusalem at twelve years old, with the questioning of the doctors and the subsequent return to Nazareth in subjection to His parents. These peeps at the childhood are of intense interest to the Christian believer, because they so thoroughly testify to the reality of the Lord's humanity: they are the more valuable because the language used in recording them seems to have been chosen with the express purpose of making clear this doctrine. Note, for example, the words with which this portion of the history comes to a close: *Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*<sup>2</sup> It would be impossible to devise a sentence which should more fully and distinctly declare that, whatever were the circumstances of the Lord's conception, the law of His being in childhood and boyhood was essentially the same as that which belongs to the whole human race: a gradual growth of physical and mental power—not a mere semblance of childhood and boyhood, but a real human development—so that the phrase of the Nicene Creed is true in the fullest and deepest sense, *He was made man*. If the latter thirty verses of

<sup>1</sup> *Pseudo-Matthæi Evangelium*, chap. xviii.; Tischendorf's *Evangelia Apocrypha*.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke ii. 52.



the second chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke were taken by themselves, there would be little beyond a few incidental phrases to which any objection could be taken by those who wish to reduce the life-history of our Lord to that of a very remarkable man. It is the life-history of a *Man*, and was so intended to be.

The life-history of one who was *man*, and who yet was in the truest sense *divine*, must of necessity transcend in many ways the history and experience of ordinary men. In what way the transcendent qualities are manifested can only be known by study of the actual records of the Lord's sayings and doings. It is unwise to attempt upon *a priori* grounds to assert the proper manner of the manifestation. There is no ground upon which conclusions can be formed. By hypothesis, there is no parallel case by which probable conclusions can be suggested. Therefore we must study the records: and though we may find in them things which we should not have anticipated, it may be asserted with considerable confidence that upon the whole they reveal to us a picture of human weakness and divine strength which would have been impossible to mere invention, but which commends itself to thoughtful reverent minds as not unworthy of being regarded as a portrait of Him who was both God and man.

Let it be further observed that the two portions of the Lord's life which have been most impressed through the agency of the eye—a very powerful agency—upon the minds of men, have been the childhood and the crucifixion. This latter event will be discussed in our next chapter; but with regard to the childhood, the readers attention may suitably be directed to the amount of genius and pictorial skill which have been directed towards realising, in forms of unspeakable beauty, the truth that Jesus Christ was once a child in His mother's arms.<sup>1</sup> It may be that the disproportionate amount of reverence given to the mother has tended to cloud the true teaching which the innumerable representations of *Madonna and Child* are calculated to convey: it would seem that all

<sup>1</sup> *Legends of the Madonna as represented in the Fine Arts*, by Mrs. Jameson.



good things may be abused, and certainly the pictures in question are no exception: but making every allowance in this respect, may it not be said that the entrancing efforts of great artists are a tribute to the childhood of Christ? Do they not tend in a remarkable manner to illustrate the truth, that while the Church believes in the miraculous conception, it equally holds to the real childhood? This equilibrium between opposite views of truth has ever been a characteristic of that which the Church holds to be the right faith. In the course of ecclesiastical history we find some who would be ready to accept the Divine side of our Lord's history, provided they might believe that His body was only a phantom: we find others who have been ready to acknowledge any amount of human excellence, provided that essential divinity is not claimed. The Catholic Church has ever held, and holds still, that the truth is to be found in accepting in their fulness the two assertions concerning Christ, which declare at once His godhead and His manhood. Each is true, and the union of the two constitutes *the* truth. And so, in acknowledging that Jesus Christ was *conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary*, we acknowledge His divine being, and yet the reality of His Childhood and the reality of His Manhood.

This chapter may be suitably concluded by a reference to the phrase *Son of man*, as applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. The reader will probably be familiar with the striking fact, that this title is nowhere in the Gospels applied to the Lord except by Himself. This peculiarity of use is rendered, perhaps, more notable when it is observed that the exact converse is found in the case of the prophet Ezekiel: that is to say, whereas the title is constantly applied to that prophet in divine messages sent to him, on no occasion does he so describe himself. The reason of this, so far as the prophet Ezekiel is concerned, it is unnecessary to inquire; but the observed fact with reference to the Lord Jesus is one which can scarcely be passed over by any student of the doctrine of the Incarnation. For it seems almost self-evident that the application to Himself of the title, especially when taken in

connection with the abstention from the use of it by His disciples, implies something mysterious, something below the surface, something beyond the mere letter of the words. On the supposition of the truth of that which the Creed declares, and which the Church holds, concerning the human and divine nature of Christ, the phenomenon presented by the Gospel use of the phrase *Son of man* becomes easily intelligible. If Jesus Christ were primarily the Son of God, if He had taken human nature upon Him, if human flesh were (so to speak) the veil which concealed Godhead, then the presentation of Himself by Himself as emphatically the *Son of man* would be the declaration of the very truth which it concerned mankind to believe. Manhood, in all its completeness and reality, was the very letter credential from the Court of Heaven of Him who came to be an ambassador of peace and love to this world. But upon any lower hypothesis than that of the divine nature of Christ the title *Son of man* would seem to be without significance. If Jesus was a man simply and solely, as each one of His brethren according to the flesh was, why say anything about it? what solemnity could there be in the title? why should His disciples have scrupled to use it?

These remarks will be strengthened by reference to one special occasion upon which the Lord claimed the title. When standing for trial before Caiaphas, the High Priest, we read that these words were addressed to Him: *I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God.* To which appeal the Lord answered thus: *Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*<sup>1</sup> Let the reader note the contrast between *Son of God* on the lips of Caiaphas, and *Son of man* on the lips of Jesus Christ. The words *Thou hast said* seem to accept the assertion that He, Jesus of Nazareth, the accused, is in the highest sense the Son of God, and then the assertion is added that the same Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of man. There must be some deep and solemn meaning in

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxvi. 63, 64.

the juxtaposition of two such titles, especially upon so supreme an occasion.

The Gospel use of the phrase *Son of man* is rendered still more emphatic by observing the subsequent application in the New Testament.

The first occasion, upon which human lips are recorded as having applied the title to the Lord, is the martyrdom of St. Stephen. The circumstances were exceptional. The first of the *noble army of martyrs* was about to seal his testimony with his blood. The heavens were opened to him, and he saw a vision of God. What was the exact nature of the vision we need not inquire: the eye of Stephen's soul was permitted to see it; that was enough for him, and may be enough for us. *Behold*, cried the first martyr, *I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.*<sup>1</sup> It throws great light upon the meaning of the phrase, that it should have been applied to the Lord for the first time in such circumstances: during all His weary pilgrimage through this world He called Himself the *Son of man*, but no one else did so: it was only when the visible signs of manhood had passed away, and Jesus Christ had ascended (as His disciples believed) to the right hand of God, that any one of them ventured to speak of Him under this remarkable title.

This observation is strengthened by reference to the other instances of the use of the name in the New Testament. They occur in the Book of the Revelation of St. John. The very character of this book throws a light upon the subject. It is a vision of Heaven, on a larger scale than that which was vouchsafed to Stephen: the language is likely to have an unearthly tone in it: it may be necessary to imagine ourselves as translated heavenwards in order to understand the language. Bearing this in mind, let the reader note two passages. *I saw*, writes St. John, *seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man.*<sup>2</sup> It would almost seem, from the manner in which the title is used, as if at the date of the Apocalypse the tacit restriction upon its

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 12, 13.

application had been removed. At all events, St. John used the phrase without any apparent hesitation. But the second passage in which the phrase occurs is much grander and more notable than the first. *I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the Temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.*<sup>1</sup> This language harmonises with those words spoken by the Lord Himself: the Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man:<sup>2</sup> in both cases the ultimate judgment, the reaping of the earth, is connected with the office of the Lord Jesus Christ emphatically as the *Son of man*.

This doctrinal point will be brought more distinctly under notice when we come to consider the seventh article of the Creed: for the present it may be sufficient to remark that the New Testament use of this title of the Lord Jesus illustrates the truth of His essential manhood and the connection of the manhood with the Godhead in a most instructive manner. He who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary could, without blasphemy, claim to be called the *Son of God*, and yet might truly claim for His best and dearest title amongst His disciples the condescending, sympathetic, but most precious title of the *Son of man*.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xiv. 14, 15, 16.

<sup>2</sup> St. John v. 27.

## CHAPTER V

### ARTICLE IV

SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED,  
DEAD, AND BURIED

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*I delivered unto you that which I also received, how that  
Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ; and  
that he was buried—1 Cor. xv. 3, 4*



## FRANCE—SEVENTH CENTURY.

This Creed represents the tradition that each article of the Apostles' Creed was dictated by one of the Apostles themselves.

1. *Petrus dixit, Credo in Deum Patrem, omnipotentem ;*
2. *Johannes dixit, Credo in Jesum Christum,  
Filiū ejus unicum,  
Deum et Dominum nostrum ;*
3. *Jacobus dixit, Natum de Mariā Virgine per Spiritum  
Sanctum ;*
4. *Andreas dixit Passum sub Pontio Pilato crucifixum  
et sepultum ;*
5. *Philippus dixit, Descendit ad inferna ;  
Thomas dixit, Tertiā die resurrexit ;*
6. *Bartholomæus dixit, Ascendit in Cælos,  
Sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris omnipotentis ;*
7. *Matthæus dixit, Inde venturus judicare vivos et mortuos ;*
8. *Jacobus Alphæi dixit, Credo in spiritum Sanctum ;*
9. *Simon Zelotes dixit, Credo in Ecclesiam sanctam ;*
10. *Judas Jacobi dixit, Per baptismum sanctum remissionem  
peccatorum ;*
11. *Matthias dixit, Carnis resurrectionem,*
12. *In vitam æternam.*

*Harmonia Symbolica, p. 67.*

## CHAPTER V.

## ARTICLE IV.

SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED,  
DEAD, AND BURIED. (H.)

THIS is the only article of the Creed which can be rightly regarded as resting upon an historical foundation, and on that only.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, there is in the article something more than mere history. It must justify its position in the Creed by considerations which are not historical; it needs the element of faith in order to transform dry facts into something capable of supporting spiritual life. Yet it is well to recognise as fully as possible the historical basis upon which the article stands; let its undeniable historical truth be admitted, and it will be found difficult not to draw from it conclusions of the deepest importance to every one who says, I believe the article to be true.

There are several points to which attention may be specially directed.

In the first place, reference is made to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, concerning whom we read in the Gospels, and of whose life and character we gather important particulars from other sources. Tacitus, for example, writes as follows: *Christus, Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum*

<sup>1</sup> 'The account of St. Luke reads like the report of what had passed given by one who throughout had been quite close by, perhaps taken part in the crucifixion; if one might almost venture to suggest, that it had been furnished by the Centurion. The narrative of St. John reads markedly like that of an eyewitness, and he a Judæan. . . . Lastly, the account of St. Matthew seems as if written from the priestly point of view, as if it had been furnished by one of the Priests or Sanhedrim party, present at the time.'—Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book V. chap. xv.

*supplicio adfectus erat.*<sup>1</sup> This statement is equivalent to that of the Apostles' Creed, with two exceptions: first, the particular form of *supplicium* or punishment, namely, crucifixion, is not specifically mentioned; and, secondly, the additional particular is supplied that the thing happened while Tiberius was emperor.

If there were any ground for doubting the truth of the story as told in the Gospels, this testimony of Tacitus would be of the highest value—would, in reality, be conclusive. But there is no such reason. If the narrative had occurred in the work of any ordinary author—still more, if it were found with slight and natural variations in the works of several contemporary authors of the ordinary kind—no one would dream of questioning its truth. And it may perhaps be doubted whether the simple bare truth of the story is questioned by any reasonable man: it is the conclusions drawn from the narrative, the place assigned in their religious system to the crucifixion by the followers of Christ, which rouses opposition and causes dislike. *The offence of the cross,*<sup>2</sup> of which St. Paul speaks, can only be understood in the light of other utterances, such as these: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>3</sup> *I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*<sup>4</sup>

Upon this view of the cross of Jesus Christ more must be said hereafter: for the present let it be observed, that the historical truth of our Lord's suffering under Pontius Pilate is brought home to our minds more vividly, if we take into account that, in addition to the passing mention by Tacitus, there are several other notices of this Roman governor outside the Gospel records.

We learn from Josephus<sup>5</sup> that his anxiety to avoid giving offence to Cæsar did not save him from political disaster. The Samaritans were unquiet and rebellious. A leader of their own race had promised to disclose to them the sacred treasures which Moses was reputed to have concealed in Mount Gerizim. Pilate led his troops against them, and defeated them easily enough. The Samaritans

<sup>1</sup> *Annal.* xv. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Gal.* v. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Gal.* vi. 14.

<sup>4</sup> *1 Cor.* ii. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 4, § 1.

complained to Vitellius, now President of Syria, and he sent Pilate to Rome to answer their accusations before the emperor. When he reached it he found Tiberius dead and Caius Caligula on the throne, A.D. 36. Eusebius adds<sup>1</sup> that soon afterwards, 'wearied with misfortunes,' he killed himself. As to the scene of his death there are various traditions. One is that he was banished to Vienne on the Rhone, where a singular monument, a pyramid on a quadrangular base, eighty-two feet high, is called Pontius Pilate's tomb. Another is that he sought to hide his sorrows on the mountain by the Lake Lucerne, now called Mount Pilate; and there, after spending years in its recesses, in remorse and despair rather than penitence, plunged into the dismal lake which occupies its summit. . . . We learn from Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Eusebius, and others, that Pilate made an official report to Tiberius of our Lord's trial and condemnation; and in a homily ascribed to Chrysostom, though marked as spurious by his Benedictine editors, certain 'Acts of Pilate' are spoken of as well-known documents in common circulation. That he made such a report is highly probable, and it may have been in existence in Chrysostom's time; but the 'Acts of Pilate' now extant in Greek, and two Latin epistles from him to the emperor, are certainly spurious.<sup>2</sup>

These particulars have been given for the purpose of presenting the person and character of Pontius Pilate somewhat vividly before the reader's mind: the historical reality of Pontius Pilate is as clear and undeniable as that of the Emperor Tiberius himself, though a large portion of his life lies in an obscurity which might have been expected and need not be regretted. If it be asked, why prominent mention is made of this unhappy man in the Apostles' Creed, it should be at once and unhesitatingly replied that the reason is to be sought in the felt importance of fixing the date of our Lord's death, and not in any desire to hold up the name of Pontius Pilate to the execration of the Church. With two exceptions,<sup>3</sup> which may be regarded as proving the rule, nothing like an anathema is found, either in the Creed or in the writings of the Apostles in the New Testament. Even the treachery of Judas Iscariot is gently handled in the Gospels and in the

<sup>1</sup> *H. E.* ii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, article 'Pilate.'

<sup>3</sup> The exceptions are to be found in 1 Cor. xvi. 22, and Gal. i. 8, 9.

Acts of the Apostles; no record of it is found in the Epistles, and it is entirely omitted from the Creed. This is a feature in Christian documents, which possibly might have been anticipated by those who have studied the Lord's teaching and example; but it is certainly worthy of notice, especially because familiarity with a fact sometimes blinds the mind's eye to its moral importance. In the present instance, we may safely conclude that the name of Pontius Pilate was introduced into the Creed simply as a note of time; and it is the only note of time that the Creed contains. The Lord is stated to have been born and His mother's name is given, but the year of the nativity is left in the dark. If we strike out the name of Pilate, we lose the one link which the Apostles' Creed presents between the events upon which it depends and the ordinary chain of history. This is the view taken by Bishop Pearson, who writes as follows:

As the Son of God by His determinate counsel was sent into the world to die in the fulness of time, so it concerns the Church to be assured of the time in which He died. And because the ancient custom of the world was to make their computations by their governors, and refer their historical relations to the respective times of their government; therefore, that we might be properly assured of the actions of our Saviour which He did, and of His sufferings (that is, the actions which others did to Him), the present governor is named in that form of speech which is proper to such historical or chronological narrations, when we affirm that He suffered under Pontius Pilate.<sup>1</sup>

And this is all that needs to be said concerning the fourth article of the Creed, regarded from a purely historical point of view; for if the fact of the Lord's suffering be admitted, even in the hard, dry, and naturally unsympathetic manner in which Tacitus reports it, all the rest of the article becomes so probable and consequential that it must be regarded as mere folly to question its truth. The punishment of crucifixion was so common where the Romans had rule, that this particular form would be more probable than any other;

<sup>1</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. i. p. 337. So St. Augustine (*De Fide et Symbolo*): 'Addendum erat iudicis nomen, propter temporum cognitionem.'



hence, if our Lord was treated as a malefactor, He was in all probability crucified, and if crucified, He would not be taken down from the cross till after death, and then it would be not difficult to believe (though it could not be assumed without testimony) that he was buried. Hence the most consistent opponent of the claims of Christ to be what the Church believes Him to have been might accept this article: no reasonable argument can be adduced against it: it expresses exactly that which the unbelieving Jews of early times believed: in fact, if the Creed terminated with this article it would not be worth while to oppose it, for the Catholic Church could not possibly have been built upon it. It is as an introduction to what follows that the article has its value. The early preachers of the Gospel of Christ, the founders of the Catholic Church, professed belief in One who had truly died and been buried, because they believed also that the same divine and human person, whose Gospel they were preaching, was living at the right hand of God. So writes St. Paul: *Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*<sup>1</sup>

The connection between the death and burial of our Lord, and His triumph over death and all that is alleged by Christians to be connected with it, will come under consideration hereafter. For the present let it be observed, that although the death and burial may be regarded and rightly described as matter of history, they are nevertheless to the Christian believer infinitely more. They may not be connected with faith objectively, but they have everything to do with faith subjectively: or, to put the same consideration in simpler terms, while the mere historical intellect accepts the death of Christ as a fact, it is only Christian faith that can appreciate its meaning, and turn it into living spiritual truth.

This thought is worthy of being followed through the several sub-divisions of this article of the Creed.

<sup>1</sup> Romans viii. 34.

1. *Suffered.*

Let us look upon this emphatic word in all its solitary sadness and dignity. Observe its position in the Creed. It immediately follows the declaration that Jesus Christ was a divine person, and that He was born into this world in an extraordinary way. After the recital of the birth, it would seem most natural that the next step should be to say what Jesus Christ did in the world. If the Creed had been a mere epitome of Gospel history, this is what would have been done. Take any one of the Gospels: especially take that of St. Luke, as being in its earlier portions the most orderly and most circumstantial of the four. An epitome of this Gospel would tell us that Jesus Christ *increased in wisdom and stature*<sup>1</sup> as a boy, that He was *tempted in the wilderness*,<sup>2</sup> that when *about thirty years of age*<sup>3</sup> He entered upon His ministry, in performing which He preached repentance and worked miracles; that ultimately He was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, and so given up to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, under whom He was crucified. This account of our Lord's life and ministry might seem to be as brief as could easily be devised; but even if it were thought unnecessary to mention as many particulars as have been here specified, it might be argued that at least there should be some reference to the teaching and the miracles, or some one sentence like that striking passage in which St. Peter is recorded to have summed up his Master's life, *Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil*.<sup>4</sup> It must be admitted that the omission from the Creed of all such reference to our Lord's manner of life is remarkable: the omission cannot have been due to carelessness, or to ignorance, or (as the Church believes) to the want of guidance on the part of the Holy Spirit of God. Why, then, was the omission made?

Might not the guiding idea of the Creed be that of selecting and bringing into prominence those points, which were specially

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke ii. 52.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke iii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke iv. 1, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Acts x. 38.

connected with the claims of Jesus Christ to be regarded as the Son of God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the future Judge of mankind? As a prophet and teacher, Jesus the prophet and teacher of Galilee stood as one amongst many: the first, it may be—in the opinion of His disciples, the first beyond all comparison or doubt—but still one amongst many. *Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest Thou Thyself?*<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as a doer of wonderful works, He was not the only person who laid claim to such power. His own countrymen were quite familiar with the notion of ‘signs’ long before Jesus appeared in the world. Every student of the Old Testament, and every one who has observed the manner in which the Lord’s miracles were regarded by His countrymen, will perceive that this was so. *What sign shewest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?*<sup>2</sup> And even with regard to the character of *going about doing good*, there was nothing in it which would entirely mark off from the rest of mankind, and put into a class by himself, a man who could be so described; other men have gone about doing good, though not so entirely, so unreservedly, so unselfishly, and with such power to help both body and soul, as Jesus Christ. It should be remembered also that the Apostles’ Creed does not pretend to be a complete course of instruction in the Gospel; it stands rather in the position of the entrance porch of the Christian Church. Those who enter by that porch have the privilege of learning in the company of the faithful, by teaching and by worship, more concerning Him in whom they have professed their belief, and whom they have accepted as Master and Lord. This was so from the first. Justin Martyr tells us that when the early Christians met together on Sunday for common worship before the break of day, one of their exercises was the reading of the ‘Memoirs of the Apostles’<sup>3</sup> (τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων), that is, in all probability, our Gospels, or at all events some writings equivalent. The reading of a portion of Gospel history has in fact from time immemorial occupied a place in the great

<sup>1</sup> St. John viii. 53.<sup>2</sup> St. John ii. 18.<sup>3</sup> *Apol.* I. cap. 67.

Eucharistic office or Liturgy of the Church, similar to that which it holds in the present day. Therefore each Christian convert would have abundance of opportunity of hearing from his spiritual guides what Jesus Christ did and taught. But with regard to the great point that Jesus Christ was a suffering Messiah, a *Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief*,<sup>1</sup> this must be understood before His service was accepted; there must be no mistake about this in the mind of any convert. *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*<sup>2</sup> Few expressions indicate more clearly and more touchingly the feeling of the early Christians towards Christ than those words of St. Paul to the Church at Philippi, *Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.*<sup>3</sup> They who preached Christ did not desire to obtain proselytes under false pretences; they who joined the body of believers must know from the first the distinctive character of Him in whom they professed their faith; there would be abundance to be learned concerning Him and His doings and His doctrine afterwards; and, if His disciples could be trusted in what they said concerning their own feelings and experience, He would be found to be, when they knew Him, all that imagination could picture or heart desire: <sup>4</sup>

*Quam dulcis es petentibus,  
Sed quid invenientibus!*

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah liii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xvi. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Philip. i. 29.

<sup>4</sup> This experience, be it observed, is quite uniform from the beginning till now. Unbelievers may scoff at it, but they must admit it as a fact, and as a fact they must deal with it. Take an illustration from the *Imitation of Christ*, the most widely-circulated book, except the Holy Scriptures, that the world has yet seen.

‘What can the world without Jesus give you? To be without Jesus is Hell; to be with Him is Paradise. If Jesus be with you, no enemy can hurt you. He who finds Jesus finds a great treasure, yea, a treasure above all treasures; and he who loses Jesus loses more than the whole world. He who lives near to Jesus is rich beyond all the rich men of this world, and he who lives without Him is the poorest of the poor.’ (Book II. chap. viii.)

Language such as this finds its echo in hundreds of modern hymns, sometimes exceeding perhaps in their expressions the bounds of soberness: but the possibility of such language is a phenomenon as worthy of explanation as the motion of the planets. A volume of modern hymns may be compared with the Book of Psalms; the Psalms are the outpouring of a soul athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: the hymns of the Church are the outpouring of souls athirst for Christ.



But that was to be in the future, not on the first entrance into the society of the faithful: at the entrance they must contemplate the sad visage of the *Man of Sorrows*: unless they could make up their minds to this, progress was impossible.

Very remarkable, no doubt; quite contrary to all expectation or experience; contrary to all that reason and philosophy would dictate. But so in fact things were in the beginning of the Church's history. No one can question this who reads the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles, the Apostolic Epistles, the Revelation of St. John the Divine, entirely agree in their testimony, direct and indirect, as concerning the preaching of a crucified Lord. 'My love is crucified,' are words attributed to St. Ignatius. The Apostles' Creed is in harmony with the whole spirit of Apostolic times in concentrating the life-history of the Lord Jesus into this one comprehensive and emphatic word, *suffered*.<sup>1</sup>

It should be observed, however, in connection with this feature of the Apostles' Creed, that to the Lord's own countrymen, to whom the Gospel was, in the first instance, preached in preference to the rest of the world, the notion of a suffering Messiah was not apparently calculated to offer any serious obstacle to His being accepted as the fulfilment of the hopes and longings of Israel. The Jews depended much, professedly altogether, upon their sacred books. They had gathered from the prophetical writings, which their learned men studied, and which were habitually read on the Sabbath day in their synagogues, the conception of a Messiah who was to restore the glories of their race and country, and more than restore them, by giving to the Church and Kingdom of Israel such a world-wide extension as it had never had even in the palmy days of David and Solomon. Some critics of our own time are disposed to read prophecy after a new fashion, and even to assert roundly that no such thing as prophecy, properly so called, ever has been

<sup>1</sup> 'The earlier Creeds,' observes Dr. Heurtley, 'for the most part were content to express merely the Crucifixion and the Burial, implying the Passion in the one, and the Death in the other. St. Irenæus sums up all in one, *καὶ τὸ πάθος*.' A very touching condensation.



or ever possibly can be. With these critics we need not in the present matter enter into any controversy ; the question is, not what the old prophets could or could not do, but what conclusions the Jews, at or about the time of our Lord's presence in the world, actually and without contradiction, drew from the writings attributed to those prophets. Whether the critics be right or wrong in their conclusions, the fact remains that the Jewish Rabbis in ancient times formed certain expectations concerning a Messiah from their Old Testament studies. About the date of our Lord's birth the expectation of a coming Messiah was in the air. Devout men and women were *waiting for the consolation of Israel*,<sup>1</sup> like Simeon and Anna. When a stir was made about John the Baptist, *the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou ? And he confessed and denied not ; but confessed, I am not the Christ.*<sup>2</sup> In like manner, when John was himself a prisoner, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus, saying, *Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another ?*<sup>3</sup> On one occasion we read of the tendency of the people to *take Him by force to make Him a king* ;<sup>4</sup> and throughout the whole history of the twelve Apostles in relation to their Lord, there peeps out from time to time the indication of a strong underlying belief that sooner or later Jesus would throw off His garb of humility, rally the people to His standard, and free His country from the Roman yoke. Looking at the matter from a human standpoint, it can scarcely be doubted, that if Jesus of Nazareth had proclaimed Himself to be the deliverer whom they were all expecting, thousands would have joined Him gladly. It is in connection with this view of the Lord's life that we must understand the temptation in the wilderness, *All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.*<sup>5</sup> The Lord might have had earthly power had He wished ; but the result would have been to establish the kingdom of Satan, not the kingdom of God.

And yet, as has already been incidentally remarked, it would be a mistake to suppose that the conception of a suffering Messiah was to the Jews altogether novel and unheard of.

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke ii. 25.<sup>2</sup> St. John i. 19, 20.<sup>3</sup> St. Luke vii. 20.<sup>4</sup> St. John vi. 15.<sup>5</sup> St. Matt. iv. 9.

This could hardly be, if they accepted the writings of their own prophets in anything at all like their obvious meaning. Indeed it is quite certain that this remarkable feature of the Messiah's character, as portrayed (according to Jewish belief) in the prophetic writings, had not escaped attention. How could it be otherwise in presence of such language as follows? *He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not.*<sup>1</sup> Again: *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth.*<sup>2</sup> This is obviously a picture of suffering, grievously inflicted and patiently borne. Whether, according to the difficulty which suggested itself to the mind of the Ethiopian nobleman, the prophet speaks of *himself* or of *some other man*,<sup>3</sup> the picture is as clear as if Raffaele or Domenichino had painted it. But there are passages in the chapter, which indicate that there is something special in the nature and in the results of the suffering. *Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.*<sup>4</sup> This kind of language, whatever may be the limit of its meaning, at least implies that there is in the suffering of Him of whom the prophet speaks something which reaches in interest and in result beyond the sufferer. Again: *the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*<sup>5</sup> It cannot be fairly argued that a Jew in olden times, before the coming of Christ or during our Lord's lifetime, would understand this language in the same complete and concrete manner as is natural to a Christian disciple and worshipper, who hears the chapter read in his parish church as a proper lesson on Good Friday; but we are not surprised to find that Jewish students could, and, as a matter of fact, did, detect in it the forecast of some remarkable person, who should suffer in an extraordinary way, and in whose sufferings the Jewish nation had an interest; to find, in

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah liii. 3.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah liii. 7.<sup>3</sup> Acts viii. 34.<sup>4</sup> Isaiah liii. 4, 5.<sup>5</sup> Isaiah liii. 6.

reality, that the Jews of old time could see in Isaiah's language the foreshadowing of a suffering Messiah.

This view would be strengthened by a further consideration, suggested by Isaiah's language, namely, that the suffering and shame and affliction spoken of by the prophet were the forerunners of some great triumph. *I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong ; because He poured out His soul unto death : and He was numbered with the transgressors ; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* Thus the history of the person spoken of, whoever he may be, involves, (1) afflictions, suffering, contempt, shame, death ; (2) some kind of widespread benefit arising from these ; and (3) the glorification and exaltation and triumph of the afflicted, suffering, despised person. To say that all this fits in precisely with that which Christians believe concerning Jesus Christ, is only to say that which is obviously and palpably true : but the point which it is now desired to enforce is this, that the ancient Jews did undoubtedly apply the language of Isaiah to their expected Messiah ; they did not shrink from the thought of suffering in connection with Him. Why should they ? There is nothing abstractedly repulsive or degrading or revolting in suffering. Had not Israel's greatness grown out of the affliction in Egypt ? Did not Moses suffer much, great as he was ? Was not Job amongst the saints ? And what of Elijah and Jeremiah and Daniel ? The ancient Jews would probably be able to sympathise with that passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews in which we read of those who were *destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy*.<sup>1</sup> It needed no Christian education to enable Hebrews to appreciate such words. In fact, it seems impossible for a noble mind to doubt the possibility of self-denying suffering, patiently borne, leading to vast benefits for others, and to the ultimate happiness of the sufferer himself. And so the Jews were not repelled by Isaiah's description of a suffering Messiah ; it was only when they saw the description realised in the history of Jesus of Nazareth that they found themselves repelled. They

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 37, 38.

fulfilled the prophecy: *when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.*<sup>1</sup>

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the manner in which the Jews, since our Lord's time, have got over the difficulty presented by their own prophetic books, with respect to their rejection of Jesus Christ as Messiah. The study of human nature is sufficient to suggest plausible reasons why the Jews who saw and heard Him should as a body have rejected Him; though it must ever be remembered that many received Him, and that all the first preachers of the Gospel were Jews. When the rejection had taken place, the same study of human nature may suffice to supply an explanation of the fact, that the Jews in later times have to a great extent followed in their fathers' steps. They still see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him.

Meanwhile, a suffering Christ has been accepted to a large extent as the Messiah for whom the heart of the world has yearned. The world is a suffering world, and a suffering head is in sympathy with it. A mere teacher could never regenerate the world, though he might do much to mend it, and the Lord Jesus Christ did as a teacher do much. By almost universal assent no man ever spake as He did; few would venture to deny to the Sermon on the Mount the character of being the very best teaching that the world ever received. Again, a mere example for men to follow will not do all that is required, because men have neither the wish nor the power to follow the example thoroughly; yet it is impossible to point to any example more telling than the *meekness and gentleness of Christ.*<sup>2</sup> But much which teaching and example cannot sufficiently do may be done by sympathy. Jesus Christ *suffered*: suffered with us and for us: *suffered for our salvation*, as the Nicene Creed has it: lifted the great burden which lay upon humanity though *He groaned in Himself*<sup>3</sup> as He lifted it. He *carried our sorrows*,<sup>4</sup> and they who suffer in this world—as who does not?—can feel that they have a brother to sympathise with them in their sufferings, *an High Priest who can be*

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah liii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xi. 38.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. x. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah liii. 4.



*touched with the feeling of their infirmities.*<sup>1</sup> All which being so, it cannot be wondered that it should be emphatically stated in the Creed concerning Christ, that *He suffered*.

## 2. *Was crucified.*

The most effective method of dealing with this phrase, so as to bring out its full force, will be to begin at some distance from the thought of the actual circumstances of the crucifixion of our Lord.

We will begin from our own days, when crucifixion, like many other horrors which Christ has wiped away, is a thing of the past, and almost forgotten as an actual punishment of crime or mode of vengeance. Crucifixion is gone, but the cross remains. A woman dresses herself in her choicest apparel, and you probably see upon her bosom a cross of diamonds or of pearls. You look at the national flag—what we commonly call the Union Jack—and you see that it is composed of crosses. You visit almost any one of the thousands of churches which stud the land, and you find within and without the emblem of the cross: probably the church itself is cruciform. When a child is baptized it is signed with the sign of the cross; and though the ceremony was disliked by the Puritans long ago, and though perhaps there are still persons of the Puritan tone of mind to whom the ceremony is offensive, the objection is on the ground of alleged superstition, not at all on the ground that there is anything repulsive in the thought of the cross. In fact, the cross, the instrument of death for slaves and malefactors in olden time, has long been recognised as a symbol of honour, both civil and religious. The highest object in the Metropolis of England is the cross on the summit of St. Paul's. This is the position which the symbol occupies nearly nineteen centuries after the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.

In speaking of the honour in which the cross is held amongst ourselves in these latter days, we are dealing with a simple fact of experience. Two things are absolutely undeniable:

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 15



first, that nineteen centuries ago a cross was suggestive of the most painful and revolting thoughts; secondly, that in this present century, and for many centuries past, this sentiment has been utterly changed, the cross being honoured amongst civilised people more than any other symbol. The question arises, and demands an answer—How has this change been produced?

Dealing with the question merely historically, the answer is obvious, and it is just this—Jesus Christ was crucified. That is to say, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which was intended to crush Him and His claims, whatever they were, did not succeed. His followers, for some reason which rulers and philosophers and many other important persons could not understand, insisted upon this base and cruel treatment of their Master being everywhere made known and published: they gloried in it, although they freely allowed that it seemed to tell, and did tell if taken by itself, of weakness and shame. And somehow they were successful in accomplishing their aims; they persuaded many people to think as they did concerning Christ and His crucifixion. The contagion spread in a manner quite surprising and almost incredible; everything was done that human ingenuity could devise to stamp it out; but instead of this result coming to pass, after about three centuries the Roman emperor became himself a convert, adopted the cross for his standard, and believed that he had in it the surest pledge of victory. That the cross has in this way changed its position, from the lowest depth of humiliation and contempt to the highest height of honour, is as plain and certain a truth as that William the Conqueror invaded England.

But we have not yet obtained a complete answer to the question, how and why the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth changed the feeling of mankind with regard to the cross. It is easy to understand that if in a fit of popular fury an innocent man has been destroyed, there may subsequently spring up a strong feeling of popular remorse, which may exhibit itself in many ways; amongst ourselves the penitential service appointed for the annual commemoration of the death of King Charles I.

may be taken as an example. But there is something more than the mere expression of sorrow for the death of an innocent man in the attitude assumed by the early Christians, and continued by their successors, towards the cross. Let some well-known words of St. Paul be noted, as a specimen of the feeling towards the cross which was possible in Apostolic times. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*<sup>1</sup> Glorifying is quite a different thing from sorrowing, or regretting, or treating respectfully, or accepting the inevitable. To St. Paul it was evidently a positive delight, a joy, a satisfaction, a pride, to meditate upon and to write to his friends concerning the crucifixion of his Master; he considered it the very business of his life to make known the fact that Christ had been crucified, not apologising for it or softening it down or explaining it away, but endeavouring to persuade all men with whom he had influence, whether Jews or Greeks, to regard the fact in the same earnest, affectionate, enthusiastic manner as that in which he regarded it himself.

To explain and justify the feeling of St. Paul and of the early disciples—in fact, of Christians in all ages who have attained the really saintly mind—concerning the crucifixion of Christ, would require a depth of spiritual knowledge to which the present writer can lay no claim. The love of the cross, that strange and characteristic feeling of the heart of the true disciple, might well claim for itself a separate treatise, written by the hand of a saint.<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this book the following observations must suffice.

Upon any hypothesis concerning the being and nature of Jesus Christ, which represents Him as a man like ourselves, the crucifixion must be, as it was to many in early days, either a *stumblingblock*, or else *foolishness*.<sup>3</sup> To a man in the Jewish frame of mind, looking for a Messiah who should restore the throne of David in Jerusalem, it would be the former; to a

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 14.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Imitation of Christ*, Book II., chap. xii., *On the Royal Road of the Holy Cross*.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23.

man of Greek refinement and education, puzzled by the enigmas of the world and trying to solve them by speculations spun out of his own brain, it would be the latter. But if the mind be once raised to the point of view occupied by Christians, whether in primitive or mediæval or modern times, the whole aspect of the subject is changed. For to Christians Christ is not merely and simply one of themselves; not merely and simply a crucified man. They regard Christ as One, who came into the world in an altogether supernatural way for the purpose of performing an altogether supernatural work, in which all mankind are interested. The birth, the events of the life—such as the baptism, the temptation, the transfiguration—the poverty, the suffering, the contempt, no less than the works of mercy and power, together with the death, resurrection and ascension, are all regarded as coherent parts of one great drama, the result of which is the establishment of His kingdom, the salvation of man, the regeneration of humanity. The peculiarity of the triumph in which this drama ends is, that it is obtained in a quite unusual manner, namely, by humiliation and suffering. According to the phraseology of the New Testament, Christ was *made perfect through sufferings*; <sup>1</sup> and this being so, the crucifixion, which marked the extremest point of humiliation and suffering, was regarded as the chief means of triumph and success. The cross became the symbol of glory, just because it was the pre-eminent symbol of shame. The redemptive work of Christ was identified with the cross, because the cross marked the extremest depth to which the Redeemer had been willing to descend in order to accomplish His work.

From all that has now been said it will not be difficult to see, why it was suitable that the crucifixion of Christ should be made a prominent article of the Christian Creed. As a mere historical fact it may be said that it was scarcely worth inserting. It may be even suggested, that for some reasons it might have been wisely omitted. If Jesus Christ had been such as some of His critics, while denying His highest claims, candidly admit that He was, namely, a teacher of original and undeniable

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 10.

power, who collected disciples about Him and formed a school, it would have been as painful as it would have been unnecessary for those His disciples never to speak of their Master, without referring to the fact that He suffered the death of a malefactor or a slave; but on the supposition that He was what His disciples believed Him to be, and that he did what they believed that He came to do, there is nothing strange in the prominence given by them to that event in His suffering life, which they regarded as the crown of the whole, the most noble of His acts of self-sacrifice, the most precious of His miracles of mercy.

It should be remembered in this connection, that the only form of worship instituted by Jesus Christ for the edification of His Church, and for the declaration and cementing of the fellowship of His disciples, was one in which they were taught to celebrate by solemn and mystic ceremony, not His birth, not His life, not His great and loving deeds, not even His resurrection and ascension, but His death upon the cross. The body broken and the blood shed are the things which are commemorated by the bread and wine of the Holy Eucharist: they who joined in the commemoration, as all Christians from the first undeniably did, by the very service in which they took part gloried in the cross. *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, writes St. Paul, ye do shew the Lord's death.*<sup>1</sup> It may be added that the continuous celebration of the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's body and blood, in all ages and throughout all countries where the Gospel of Christ has been preached, is one of the most undeniable evidences of the feeling with which the cross has been continuously regarded. Even the superstitious extravagances, into which the feelings of reverence have sometimes developed, have given an indirect emphasis to the earnest sentiment of loving adoration which underlies and supports the whole.

Regarded thus, the article *was crucified* becomes one of the primary points of the Creed. It could not have been omitted. It loses its dry historical character as the record of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 26.



a fact which no one doubts. It indicates the central mystery upon which Christian faith rests, and a knowledge of which Christians believe themselves to be bound to propagate. Many in all days, and not least in these days, have said that Christians are in the wrong as regards the whole question. But before joining in a cry against Christians, it is well to consider carefully what it is that they hold, and the circumstances in which they have come to hold it. In the present case it may be suggested, that the apparent impossibility at the time of our Lord's crucifixion of persuading people in general that His shameful death was the sign and proof of divine greatness, and of leading them to honour not merely the crucified man but the very instrument of His crucifixion, ought in all fairness and honesty to be regarded, in the event of success, as a strong argument for believing that the power of divine truth, rather than the weakness of human folly, was on the side of the Christians. Can anything short of the power of divine truth be suggested, as at all adequate or even likely to make the cross triumphant? Can we wonder that St. Paul should speak, even with such modified triumph as he was permitted to see, of Christ crucified as *the power of God and the wisdom of God*?<sup>1</sup>

Before passing away from this part of our subject, it will be useful and interesting to note the manner in which the crucifixion of our Lord may be regarded in Old Testament light. The prophetic question has already been touched upon; but the Old Testament light, to which reference is now made, is something much farther reaching than the fulfilment of a prophetic announcement, however exact. Those who believe that the Old Testament and the New are vitally and divinely connected, being ultimately the work of the same Holy Spirit, generally believe also that the Old Testament, by type and shadow and ceremonial observances no less than by prophecy, is full of Christ. St. Augustine says of the Psalms, 'Vix est ut in Psalmis invenias voces, nisi Christi et Ecclesiæ.' It is

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i, 24.



not necessary to assert that this mode of regarding Holy Scripture has never led to extravagance; but it certainly leads to many remarkable results, and it is one which it is impossible for the candid student entirely to put aside.

This view of the crucifixion of our Lord may suitably be introduced by reference to the language of St. Paul. *Christ our Passover, is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast.*<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ was crucified, as the Gospels record, at the time of the Jewish Passover feast. The last thing which the Lord did in preparation for His passion was to keep the Passover with His disciples. It is evident that He connected His own death in some mysterious way with that feast; and as a matter of historical fact, the Paschal feast of the Jewish Church was translated into the Paschal feast of the Christian; and Jesus Christ assumed to the mind of the Christian Church the place, not only of the high-priest, who offered a great sacrifice to God, but also that of the lamb which was slain. Regarding the death of the Lord thus, that is, seeing it in the light of the Passover as its type and forerunner, it is impossible not to think of all that the feast of the Passover meant to those who celebrated it in old time. It was a feast which recorded deliverance from bondage, the birth of a free people, the commencement of a national history. If the antitype be greater than the type, and the substance more than the shadow, the feast of Christ, the true Passover, would mean something infinitely higher and greater than deliverance from Egyptian bondage. It is not necessary to attempt to describe all that it meant, or was believed to mean; but when we find mention of a full and sufficient sacrifice for sin offered on the cross once for all, and when we find all human hopes connected in the minds of the Apostles and by the Church ever since with this alleged sacrifice, we can understand why the crucifixion should hold so prominent a place as that assigned to it in the Christian Creed. *Christ crucified is Christ our Passover.*

But we may take a much wider view. There are many other typical anticipations of the death of Christ, besides that

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

of the Passover and the Paschal lamb, which have presented themselves and do present themselves to devout minds in the study of the Old Testament. Pre-eminent stands the sacrifice of Isaac, with all the circumstances of analogy which careful and reverent examination of the history brings to light. Isaac, the only and beloved son of his father, who gives him over to death; the words of Abraham, *God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering*; <sup>1</sup> Isaac himself bearing the wood for the altar, and submitting himself with absolute patience and gentleness to his father's will: these and such like circumstances easily connect themselves with the thought of the only begotten Son crying out, *Father, not My will, but Thine be done*; <sup>2</sup> bearing His cross; ultimately raised upon the altar of the cross, as the Lamb whom God Himself had provided as a burnt-offering to take away the sins of the world. Let it be carefully observed that this mode of connecting the Old Testament with the New, and finding in the former the shadowy anticipation of the truths of the latter, is not pressed upon the reader as having in itself such logical strength as to fit it to do battle with the enemies of the Christian faith. Nothing can be more easy or more plausible than the attitude of him, who says that he cannot consent to adopt important religious conclusions resting upon so fanciful a basis. But the view which such a statement as this suggests, is not that which it is here desired to put forward. What is commended to the reader is rather this, that when the great truths of the New Testament have been accepted on other grounds, then the recipient of these truths will scarcely fail to be struck by the apparent typical anticipations of Gospel truth which the Old Testament contains. No one would venture to claim a supreme character for the Gospels on the ground that we read in Genesis of four rivers which watered Paradise; but it does not offend the devout mind, which recognises the supreme character of the four Gospels, to find in the devotional literature of the Church the suggestion of an analogy with these four rivers: and so we are told that the Fathers saw

<sup>1</sup> Genesis xxii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xxii. 42.

in the parting of the river of Paradise into four heads 'a figure of the fourfold Gospel flowing from the one living source of inspiration, the Holy Spirit of God, and watering the spiritual Paradise of the Christian Church, and enabling it to bring forth fruits of faith and holiness.'<sup>1</sup>

It need not be denied that the enthusiasm of the early students of Christian truth, in connection with Holy Scripture, sometimes carried them to conclusions into which the more sober or colder taste of modern times may find it difficult to follow. The Fathers, for example, see in the scarlet thread which was suspended from the window of Rahab, and which saved the lives of her guests, a type of the blood of Christ which saves mankind from death.<sup>2</sup> In studies of this kind a tendency to what may be described as an amiable extravagance is just what we should be led to expect. We need not, in fact, go back to the earlier days of Church history in order to find illustration; modern sermons and devotional books afford abundant examples of a tendency, on the part of the imagination and affections, to outrun the logical intellect. We are not bound to accept every conclusion thus reached; but the fact that such conclusions have been reached, and that they do, in a certain sense, satisfy the minds of sincere and devout persons, makes it necessary to treat them with respect, and goes far to prove that the method by which the result has been attained is not altogether devoid of truth and

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, *Commentary on Genesis*, ii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> The Fathers generally consider the deliverance of Rahab as typical of salvation, and the scarlet line hung out at her window as typical of the blood of Jesus, in the same way that the ark of Noah and the blood of the Paschal lamb were. . . . Clement is the first to do so. He says that by the symbol of the scarlet line it 'was made manifest that there shall be redemption, through the blood of the Lamb, to all who believe and trust in God;' and adds that Rahab in this was a prophetess as well as a believer, a sentiment in which he is followed by Origen. Justin Martyr, in like manner, calls the scarlet line 'the symbol of the blood of Christ, by which those of all nations, who once were harlots and unrighteous, are saved;' and in a like spirit Irenæus draws from the story of Rahab the conversion of the Gentiles, and the admission of publicans and harlots into the kingdom of Heaven through the symbol of the scarlet line, which he compares with the Passover of the Exodus. Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Theodoret all follow in the same track.—Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. 'Rahab.'

reality. It is in fact difficult to draw the line in such matters between the real and the fanciful, the tenable and the untenable. There can be no manner of doubt that to habitual devout students of Holy Scripture a light seems to illuminate the sacred page, of which careless and flippant readers are not sensible. Such light is most precious to those who find it; but there is a danger of self-deception and fanaticism, against which they should be on their guard.

### 3. *Dead.*

Crucifixion did not imply immediate or speedy death as its consequence. The chief horror, in fact, of this horrible method of execution consisted in the slow, lingering, torturing kind of death which was ultimately produced. It will be remembered that in the case of the malefactors, between whom the Lord was crucified, death was accelerated by the breaking of the legs; and this seems to have been a not unusual process. It is conceivable, therefore, that a man might be affixed to a cross, and that yet he might be taken down before death had supervened, and so might subsequently live; in this case the man would be crucified, but *not* dead.<sup>1</sup>

Hence it was important that in the Christian Creed stress should be laid upon death having actually followed the crucifixion of the Lord, as well as upon the crucifixion itself; and so we have the assertion, not only that He suffered under Pontius Pilate, but also that, as the result of the suffering, He *died*.

As a question of history it would be difficult to challenge this assertion. Though it may be theoretically possible that a man should live after having been crucified, a reported crucifixion, unless the contrary be distinctly stated, must be taken to mean death. The passage from Tacitus quoted on a former page, which does not specify crucifixion as the method

<sup>1</sup> There is a curiously painful and painfully curious note on the physical effects of crucifixion in the *Speaker's Commentary* (1 St. John v. *Additional Notes*), by Dr. Haughton of Dublin.



of punishment, but merely uses the term *supplicium*—punishment—undoubtedly was intended by the author to imply a capital execution: unless this be so there would be no sufficient meaning in the passage. It is true that, according to Gospel history, *Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him*,<sup>1</sup> and in this sense punished Him or caused Him to suffer; but this would have been a trifle to the mind of a Roman historian, not worthy of being recorded: the only ground for referring to Christ would be, that under Pontius Pilate His life and labours came to an end. It may, perhaps, be interesting to note that the word used by Tacitus has its origin in the idea of *sacrifice*: this implied the death of the victim, and on this ground alone it might probably be argued that the use of the word would seem to imply the Lord's death. It may be observed, further, that the opponents of the faith in early days did not deny that the Lord died; what they denied was that He rose again from the dead. The matter is put in a colloquial, but perhaps on that account all the more pointed, form by Festus, the Roman governor, when he explained to King Agrippa the case (as he understood it) between St. Paul and his accusers: he said that he found the case to be one which concerned questions *of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive*.<sup>2</sup> To a looker-on like Festus it was, of course, a matter of extremely small moment which party was right; to Paul and the rest of the believers, the importance of the question was infinite. The importance finds a beautiful illustration in the language which St. John represents himself to have heard in vision from the lips of his risen Lord: *I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death*.<sup>3</sup> Apart from that which followed the death, and which constitutes a subsequent article of the Creed, no great emphasis could be laid upon the death of Christ. Standing by itself—if Christians can for a moment conceive of it as standing by itself—it is a merely historical event, the truth of which no reasonable person can doubt. Therefore, according to the notation

<sup>1</sup> St. John xix. i.<sup>2</sup> Acts xxv. 19.<sup>3</sup> Rev. i. 18.



adopted in this work, it has been marked with the symbol H. But the use of this symbol must not lead the reader to forget, that it is impossible to isolate the death of Christ as a matter of history, and not to connect it with other considerations in which faith plays the principal part. Indeed, the assertion that Jesus Christ really and truly died deserves careful consideration, both as regards the manner in which the fact is recorded by the Evangelists, and also as regards the position which it occupies in the cycle of Christian doctrine.

The peculiar construction of the four Gospels, as being related yet distinct, supplementing each other upon principles which have never yet been explained, indicating sometimes a common origin, and yet leaving it doubtful what the common origin was and how it was used—these and other cognate phenomena, familiar to those who have studied and compared the Gospels carefully, make it difficult to guess in what manner any particular fact of the Lord's history will be treated by the Evangelists.<sup>1</sup> No one has been able to construct anything which can be fairly described as a Gospel harmony; and it may be maintained with much reason that no one ever will. There are few events, few miracles, few discourses, which find place in all four Evangelists. This being so, let it be noted that the death of our Lord is one of those events which is recorded in all four Gospels without exception. The birth is recorded by only two; the presentation in the Temple by one; the visit to Jerusalem at the age of twelve years by one; the temptation in the wilderness by three; the institution of the Holy Sacrament of the Supper by three; the ascension by two; and so on. But the death has been omitted by no one Evangelist. It may be useful to

<sup>1</sup> I may refer to Dr. Salmon's *Introduction to the New Testament*, as containing one of the most recent and most vigorous contributions to the appreciation of this difficult subject; also to the Archbishop of York's *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels*, in the Speaker's Commentary. No volume has been more helpful to myself than the *Essay on the Composition of the Gospels*, by Mr. Smith of Jordanhill. But I am of opinion that no clear and satisfying judgment can be formed concerning the mutual relations of the Gospel histories without personal labour in examination and comparison carried on during a number of years.

note the language in which each Evangelist records the Lord's death.

St. Matthew. *Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*<sup>1</sup>

St. Mark. *Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.*<sup>2</sup>

St. Luke. *When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit; and having said this, He gave up the ghost.*<sup>3</sup>

St John. *When Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished; and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.*<sup>4</sup>

As the four Evangelists thus conspire in recording, with slight variation as to details, the fact of the Lord's death, so they equally agree in asserting His burial and resurrection. These points do not come under our immediate notice just now; but it may be suggested, that the absolutely cardinal value of the resurrection, as the foundation of Christian faith, may partly account for the emphatic and combined assertion of the death of Christ, as being the condition precedent of His rising again from the dead. In reality the disciples of the Lord ever saw His death illuminated by the resurrection; this latter fact was the source of all their joy, the spring of all their hope, the balm to all their sorrows. Unbelievers may say, if they please, that they were foolish in thinking thus concerning their Lord; but this is not the point. What is maintained is, that the early disciples, as in fact disciples in all ages, believed in a risen Christ, and that therefore to them the death of Christ was a most precious article of the Creed. *Mors janua vitæ*: death meant life: it was the dark and lowly portal, through which the Lord entered into His glory. *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, we can quite understand the reverent and devout joy with which the early chroniclers of the life of Christ would record the events of shame, cruelty, and degradation which preceded the crucifixion. It was not as if at the time they had

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxvii. 50.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark xv. 37.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 46.

<sup>4</sup> St. John xix. 30.

<sup>5</sup> St. John xii. 24,

anticipated what was to follow: their own testimony to the contrary is express and reiterated: they *questioned one with another what the rising from the dead should mean*.<sup>1</sup> When they saw their Master betrayed into the hands of the officers, and led away as a prisoner, they were in despair; when they heard Him cry with a loud voice, and witnessed His death, they probably knew not what to think. Hence, when they came to record their experience, it would be with a special feeling of satisfaction that they would note all those events which were so overwhelmingly gloomy at the time, and so full of triumph afterwards; that which made their histories worthy of being called Gospels was not merely the life, but also and still more emphatically the death, of Jesus Christ.

It may be well to add a remark upon the marvellously dispassionate and charitable tone, in which the records of the death of Christ are expressed. Not one single hard word from beginning to end: no fine writing or pathetic comments: no praise of the fortitude of the sufferer: no blame cast upon those who caused the sufferings. Perhaps the writers felt, that in the strength of their Master's subsequent triumph they could (according to a common phrase) afford to be generous. Perhaps they felt still more, that any language not perfectly gentle and forgiving would be unworthy of the disciples of Him, who was so gentle and forgiving Himself. *Love your enemies*,<sup>2</sup> was one of His early lessons; and on the cross He said concerning those who had crucified Him, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps, above all, they wrote under a divine direction, which enabled them to tell their tale in a quite un-earthly manner, and to give to the world records bearing their own internal testimony that they came from God. Anyhow, the absence of all bitterness of feeling is a notable feature of the Gospel histories.

It is obvious to remark, (as indeed has already been remarked incidentally,) that a special importance attaches to the record of the Lord's death in connection with His subsequent resurrection

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark ix, 10.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt, v, 44,

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxijj. 34,

from the grave. The death and resurrection manifestly hang together: the second cannot be accepted as true, unless the first be admitted: but as the resurrection of our Lord forms a distinct article of the Creed, it will be well to reserve any observations upon the connection of the two great events till we come to that article. There is, however, one light in which the death of Christ should be regarded, and to which reference has not yet been made. It is a light under which it passes away entirely from the province of history into that of faith. Christians may of course be represented, by those who do not acknowledge the faith of Christ, as holding superstitious or untenable views concerning the death of their Master. The disciples of Christ have been accustomed to this mode of treatment from the beginning: the treatment varies in detail from age to age, in substance it is ever the same; nor perhaps is it to be expected that the time will ever come when it will completely cease. Nevertheless it is well, even for those who think in the most disparaging and contemptuous manner of Christian doctrine, that they should bear in mind what it really is.

(1) It should be observed, in the first place, that the idea of *sacrifice* is constantly and consistently connected with the death of Christ. The Jewish Church had been taught that *without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins*.<sup>1</sup> The whole ritual of the Temple was based upon the death of victims. The principal feast was that of the Passover, in which the death of the lamb was the main incident. It was to a people educated in this sacrificial school that Jesus Christ was sent, and that He was first preached. The language and thoughts of the early Church of Christ were grafted upon, and grew out of, the language and thoughts of the Jewish Church. This consideration is worked out at great length, and with much exact care, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, from which a few quotations shall be made.

*But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and*

<sup>1</sup> Heb, ix, 22.



calves, but by *His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*<sup>1</sup> Again: *We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*<sup>2</sup> Once more: *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.*<sup>3</sup>

In like manner, St. Paul writing to the Corinthians identifies the death of Jesus Christ, which took place at the time of the Passover feast, with that of the Paschal lamb, in those bright words, which have been adopted by the Church as her Easter hymn, and which have been already quoted: *Christ our Pass-over is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast.*<sup>4</sup>

It is needless to offer other evidence from Holy Scripture of that sacrificial character of the death of Christ, which the Church has ever and everywhere held. The Apostles and those who have followed them have gloried in the life of Christ, gloried in His resurrection and ascension, but they have ever attached and do attach a peculiar value and interest to His death, as death: not merely because He conquered death by rising again, but also and even more emphatically because He died. The Church has seen in that death the redemption of mankind from sin. In the blood shed on the cross there is *a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*,<sup>5</sup> in which the redeemed may *wash their robes and make them white*.<sup>6</sup>

This unquestionably is Christian teaching. Modern writers and thinkers may say that it is very foolish teaching; but with this at the moment we have nothing to do. The point insisted upon is, that the Apostles taught thus in the beginning, that their successors teach thus still, and that it is necessary to recognise this fact in order to understand the Apostles' Creed.

(2) Another point connected with the death of Christ, which ought to be borne in mind, is the manner in which He is

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 11-14.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. x. 19.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Zech. xiii. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. vii. 14,



recorded to have spoken of it Himself. As a general rule a man shrinks from speaking of his own death, especially if he has some great work in hand with which death would interfere. But the practice of our Lord was the opposite of that which this remark would indicate. Beginning at a certain point in His ministry, He spoke frequently of His death; but He referred to it, not as an event which might unfortunately happen before the work which He had in hand was accomplished, and in contemplation of which He wished to tell the disciples what they should do when He was gone, but as something which had a definite place in the scheme of His ministry. Take a few examples:

*From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*<sup>1</sup>

*Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him: and the third day He shall rise again.*<sup>2</sup>

*He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him.*<sup>3</sup>

*He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully treated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death.*<sup>4</sup>

*When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things.*<sup>5</sup>

*Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St Matt. xvi. 21.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xx. 18, 19. <sup>3</sup> St. Mark ix. 31, 32.

<sup>4</sup> St. Luke xviii. 31, 32, 33. <sup>5</sup> St. John viii. 28. <sup>6</sup> St. John vii. 33.

But the most remarkable feature in our Lord's manner of dealing with His own death is this, that He speaks of it as a matter within His own power of choice. *Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.*<sup>1</sup>

From the passages which have been quoted from all four Evangelists, it would seem to follow, as an undeniable conclusion (whatever opinion we may hold concerning the questions which have been raised with regard to the Gospels, their origin, mutual relation, and the like,) that the Lord Jesus Christ did during His ministry speak in a most pointed manner concerning His own death; it may be added, in a manner to which there is absolutely no parallel in human history. To those who believe in Christ there is something infinitely solemn in this feature of His ministry; and to all, whether believers or not, it would seem calculated to give to the death of Christ a place by itself in the annals of mortality. What is death? To creatures lower than man it is a simple termination of that condition of activity which we call life. To man it is the termination of one life, and (as many of us believe) the beginning of another. To certain men also, independently of all consideration of a life to come, death is by no means the end of their activity: *being dead they yet speak*<sup>2</sup> by their deeds or writings, and their spirits seem to live upon earth centuries after their bodies have decayed. But the death of Christ was something different in kind from the death of the best and most notable of men; it stands by itself amongst deaths, as His life stands by itself amongst lives. It was the will of Christ to die; it was one of the things which He came into the world to do; an integral and essential portion of His ministry: not a negative termination of activity, but a voluntary sacrifice to the will of God.

Let us compare the death of our Lord with that of Socrates

<sup>1</sup> St. John x. 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 4.

—the most beautiful death outside the Christian Church, if Plato has rightly painted it—or rather let us compare the words spoken in anticipation of death by the one and the other.<sup>1</sup> Here are some of the words spoken by Socrates to those who had condemned him to death. ‘I had not the boldness or impudence or inclination to address you as you would have liked me to address you, weeping and wailing and lamenting, and saying and doing many things which you have been accustomed to hear from others, and which, as I say, are unworthy of me. But I thought I ought not to do anything common or mean in the hour of danger; nor do I now repent of the manner of my defence, and I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. . . . The difficulty, my friends, is not in avoiding death, but in avoiding unrighteousness; for that runs faster than death. . . . If death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead are, what good, O my friends and judges, can be greater than this? If indeed

<sup>1</sup> Another death ought perhaps to be quoted, namely, that of Gautama, the great founder of Buddhism. Gautama lived to the age of eighty, and then died peacefully, surrounded by his disciples. He was on a journey to Kusinagara, a town about 120 miles from Benares, when weakness seems to have overtaken him. He reached with difficulty the river Hirangavati, close to Kusinagara, and there rested for the last time. On the night of his decease he said to his disciples: ‘When I have passed away, and am no longer with you, do not think that the Buddha has left you, and is not still in your midst. You have my words, my explanations of the deep things of truth, the laws I have laid down for the Society; let them be your guide; the Buddha has not left you.’ Towards morning he asked whether any one had any doubts about the Buddha, the law, or the Society; if so, he would clear them up. No one answering, he said, ‘Beloved mendicants, if you revere my memory, love all the disciples as you love me and my doctrines.’ One of the disciples expressed his surprise that amongst so many none should doubt, and all be firmly attached to the law. But Buddha laid stress upon the final perseverance of the saints, saying, that even the least among the disciples, who had entered the first path only, still had his heart fixed on the way to perfection, and constantly strove after the three higher paths. ‘No doubt,’ he said, ‘can be found in the mind of a true disciple.’ After another pause he said, ‘Beloved, that which causes life, causes also decay and death. Never forget this; let your minds be filled with this truth. I called you to make it known to you. These were the last words Gautama spoke; shortly afterwards he became unconscious, and in that state he passed away.—See article *Buddhism* in *Encyclop. Brit.*, from which the preceding account is taken.

when the pilgrim arrives in the world below he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgment there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Æacus and Triptolemus, and other sons of God, who were righteous in their own life, that pilgrimage will be worth making. . . . The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die, and you to live. Which is better, God only knows.’<sup>1</sup>

Precious words, indicating, if ever human words did, the action of the Spirit of God upon the soul of man. But now compare them with some of the utterances of our Lord; and it will be seen that the difference between the two is not that of higher and lower, better and worse, greater or less degree of spiritual insight, but essentially one of kind. The Lord evidently regarded His death, not in relation to Himself, but in relation to His disciples; not as a condition of rest from His labours and sorrows, but as the beginning of His real activity; not as death in fact at all, but emphatically as life. Take a few examples in proof of what has now been said. *When he (Judas) was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.*<sup>2</sup> *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, ye may be also.*<sup>3</sup> *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I.*<sup>4</sup> In a different tone, but equally to the present purpose, are the words spoken to the dying malefactor. *To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*<sup>5</sup> And so also is that startling announcement to the Jewish Council, *Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God.*<sup>6</sup> These quota-

<sup>1</sup> *Jowett’s Translation*, vol. i. p. 353.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xiii. 31.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xiv. 1, 2, 3.

<sup>4</sup> St. John xiv. 27, 28.

<sup>5</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 43.

<sup>6</sup> St. Luke xxii. 69.



tions, to which others might easily be added, seem to prove distinctly, that the death of Christ is something which stands by itself in the obituary list of the human race. The death of Socrates was grand as human death can be: Plato was justified in recording it, and all his disciples might glory in it: no person of right feeling would wish in any way to detract from its nobility. But when we read the Gospels, we feel that a greater than Socrates is here: the death of Socrates is a piece of noble history; the death of Jesus Christ is a piece of history to be acknowledged with thanksgiving and to be enshrined in a Creed.

(3) One other point may be mentioned.

It has already been noted that the great service of the Church, instituted by Christ Himself, and celebrated without intermission from the very first, is a commemoration of *His death*. But in addition to this general remark concerning the basis of the great Christian service, it may be right to call attention to the striking character of the language used in the celebration of this Holy Sacrament. There are many forms of Liturgy, several claiming the highest antiquity, and there can be no manner of doubt as to the fact of our possessing at the present time much that has come down from the earliest ages of the Church. And in one main feature all Liturgies, whether the ancient forms or the more modern adaptations, agree, namely, in the tone of solemn joy and exultation which characterises their utterances; but it is joy based upon, and growing out of, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Liturgy of our own Church will abundantly illustrate the point which is here brought under notice. Take as a specimen of the language of the English Liturgy the following portion of the Consecration Prayer:

‘Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who of Thy tender mercy didst give Thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; who made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in His Holy Gospel command us to continue, *a perpetual memory of that His precious death*, until His coming again.’



It is needless to continue the quotation: the whole prayer will be familiar to the reader. But observe how death is the keynote. Yet it is not the language of those who mourn and lament for the dead: there is no weeping or wailing in it: the prayer breathes the spirit, not of disappointment and failure, but of joy and triumph and solemn exultation. It is, in fact, the main and central portion of a service which is eucharistic throughout, and which closes with the most exultant of Christian hymns. The hymn begins with the words in which the choir of Heaven heralded the birth of Christ, as though the birth and the death were equally themes of joy in this great thanksgiving: and it terminates with words, the emphatic worshipping joy of which can scarcely be surpassed: 'For Thou only art Holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father.'

The exultant character of the Liturgy, and the fact that its essential feature is the celebration of the Lord's death, should ever be borne in mind by those who wish to estimate the importance of the word *dead* in the Apostles' Creed.

#### 4. *And buried.*

Bishop Pearson remarks that 'there is nothing mysterious or difficult in this part of the article.' To this observation there will be general assent. The burial of the Lord may be regarded as a simple historical fact, the truth of which it is hypersceptical to doubt. It is, like the death, one of the few events which all four Evangelists record. It may be added that in all four Gospels Joseph of Arimathæa is mentioned in connection with the burial. It is impossible to doubt that the Lord was buried, and buried near to the scene of the crucifixion.

Nevertheless, there are certain observations which suggest themselves to the thoughtful mind, and which may with advantage be made.

In the first place, it does not follow by necessity that because in old times a person was crucified and dead, there-

fore his body was buried. On the other hand, the Roman practice would not justify this conclusion. The death by crucifixion was intended to be as shameful as it could be made, as revolting to the feelings, as horrible and therefore (it might be supposed) as deterrent a punishment as the law could devise. It was the punishment of slaves. Consequently it would have been quite out of keeping with the rest of the proceeding, that when the crucified man died any care should be taken concerning his body. Had the death of our Lord been under Jewish law, the case would have been otherwise: it was laid down in the law, *If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day.*<sup>1</sup> But our Lord's death was not under Jewish law: the nation had not the power of putting any man to death, as was pressed upon Pontius Pilate, when he endeavoured to shift the responsibility of judgment from his own shoulders to those of the Jewish court. Consequently it might conceivably have come to pass, that in handing over Jesus Christ to crucifixion, the Roman governor handed over His body to shameful treatment after death. This, however, was avoided by the petition of the Jews themselves: to have left the body upon the cross during the night would have been, as we have seen, against their law: but to have left it there during the Sabbath day, and *that Sabbath day an high day*,<sup>2</sup> would have been a scandal and an abomination. So a petition was made, that the body of Jesus and those crucified with Him should be removed before the Sabbath arrived. The petition was granted. Then comes the touching episode of the intervention of Joseph of Arimathæa. *Behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just: (the same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathæa, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was*

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxi. 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xix. 31.

*hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.*<sup>1</sup> And so it came to pass that Jesus Christ was not only crucified and dead, but also *buried*.

The burial of our Lord is thus a credible piece of history; but there is good reason why it should be distinctly recognised, and rehearsed as a portion of the Creed. For the burial is not to the Church of Christ a mere historical fact; it is the necessary link between the historical life of the Lord and that great subsequent event, the resurrection, which carries us up into that supernatural region where history melts away into faith. The rising again the third day, which comes under notice in the next article of the Creed, requires the grave of Christ as its foundation; without this going down into the earth there could be no resurrection: and therefore the burial of our Lord, and the time during which the entombment lasted, are important links in the Apostolic chain of belief, because they connect those two portions of our Lord's residence on earth upon the union of which our faith and hope depend. Christ lived: Christ died: Christ lived again. The grave of Christ is a precious, if not indispensable, link in this supernatural chain.

The grave of Christ was, as the Evangelist tells us, carefully watched. The Jews suspected that they might hear something about *that deceiver*,<sup>2</sup> whom they had crucified, rising again from the dead. So they went to Pilate and told him their fears. He treated them lightly, as a Roman governor was sure to do; the notion of the disciples coming by night and stealing the body seemed absurd to Roman notions of discipline and order. *Ye have a watch*, said he; *go your way, make it as sure as ye can.*<sup>3</sup> There was no irony in this direction, though there might be a touch of contempt. *So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.*<sup>4</sup>

It would have been well for Christendom if Joseph's new tomb, after having served its purpose as the honoured resting-place of the Lord's body, had ceased to have a memorial, except in the hearts of Christians. This, however, was not to be: the

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 50-53.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxvii. 63.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xxvii. 65.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xxvii. 66.

natural instinct, which, when the Church had rest from her persecutors, led to the identification and glorification of every spot connected with the earthly history of the Lord, fixed upon a site as that of the Holy Sepulchre. The Empress Helena, mother of the great Constantine, built a church there; and ever since that time the Church of the Holy Sepulchre has had its place in Christendom. It has been the occasion of devotion and pilgrimage, of energetic wars, of literary controversy, as well as of poetry. Its interest has by no means died away in modern times, and at the Easter season pilgrims still crowd to worship within it. It must be confessed, that the zeal, which brings together Christians of various branches of the Church to worship their common risen Lord, leads to much that is not edifying; and it must raise a blush upon every Christian cheek to think of squabbles between Eastern and Western Christians being quelled by the intervention of Moslem soldiers.<sup>1</sup> The feeling of shame may perhaps be heightened by the consideration that after all the site itself is doubtful. From the nature of the case it can scarcely fail to be so. How is it to be expected that, after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus—a destruction only too truly described by those words of our Lord, *They shall not leave in thee one stone upon another*<sup>2</sup>—how is it to be expected that the place of Joseph's new tomb should be identified? Meanwhile it may

<sup>1</sup> 'It would be an easy thing, though a melancholy task,' writes Dean Stanley, 'to tell how the Armenians stole the Angel's stone from the Ante-chapel of the Sepulchre—how the Latins procured a firman to stop the repairs of the dome by the Greeks—how the Greeks demolished the tombs of the Latin kings, Godfrey and Baldwin, in the resting-place which these two heroic chiefs had chosen for themselves at the foot of Calvary—how, in the bloody conflicts at Easter, the English traveller was taunted by the Latin monks with eating the bread of their convent, and not fighting for them in church—how the Abyssinian convent was left vacant for the Greeks in the panic raised when a drunken Abyssinian monk shot the Muezzin going his rounds on the top of Omar's minaret—how, after the fire of 1808, which fire itself the Latins charge to the ambition of the Greek monks, two years of time and two-thirds of the cost of the restoration were consumed in the endeavours of each party, by bribes and litigations, to overrule and eject the other from the places they had respectively occupied in the ancient arrangement of the churches—how each party regards the Turk as his best and only protector against the other.'—*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 463.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xix. 44.

be said—and this is the most hopeful view of the subject—that the strange and varied history of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre since the days of Helena gives emphasis to the article of the Creed with which we are now engaged. The zeal of the Empress herself, the devotion of the centuries which followed, the tremendous struggles for the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre from the possession of the Saracens in the middle ages, even the feelings of Christians (superstitious or otherwise) concerning the existing Church in our own days—all conspire to throw into prominence the fact, that Christ was buried, and to separate His burial from all others, as a thing which has a superlative interest for the whole human race.





## CHAPTER VI

### ARTICLE V

HE DESCENDED INTO HELL; THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE  
AGAIN FROM THE DEAD

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*He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures—1 COR. xv. 4*

## FRANCE.

CIRC. A.D. 750.

Dr. Heurtley remarks that this is the earliest Creed which he has met with entirely identical with our present formula.

1. *Credo in Deum Patrem Omnipotentem,  
Creatorem cœli et terræ;*
2. *Et in Jesum Christum, Filium ejus unicum,  
Dominum nostrum;*
3. *Qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto,  
Natus ex Mariâ Virgine;*
4. *Passus sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus,  
Mortuus et sepultus;*
5. *Descendit ad inferna;  
Tertiâ die resurrexit a mortuis;*
6. *Ascendit ad cœlos;  
Sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris Omnipotentis;*
7. *Inde venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos;*
8. *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum;*
9. *Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam;  
Sanctorum communionem;*
10. *Remissionem peccatorum;*
11. *Carnis resurrectionem;*
12. *Vitam æternam.*

*Harmonia Symbolica, p. 71.*

## CHAPTER VI.

## ARTICLE V.

HE DESCENDED INTO HELL; THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE  
AGAIN FROM THE DEAD. (H., F.)

ACCORDING to the method adopted in this book, the fifth article of the Creed, taken as a whole, has been marked with the two symbols H. and F. That is to say, it is suggested that the article rests partly upon historical evidence and partly upon faith. If, however, we divide the article into its two component parts, namely, the descent into hell and the resurrection from the dead, it will be obvious that the former can in no manner or degree depend upon history; it is essentially transcendental, supernatural, hyper-historical. No human pen can describe or testify to the truth of the descent of Christ into hell. Consequently, the suggestion that the fifth article rests upon historical evidence must be confined to the second clause; and with regard to the former we must make reference to those foundations which faith may be able to supply. The clauses will be considered separately and in their order.

1. *He descended into hell.*

The most important thing to be done with regard to this statement is to determine its true meaning. Unwarrantable and impossible interpretations have sometimes been suggested: these must be carefully avoided. Perhaps, when the true meaning is ascertained, it will be found that the thing asserted concerning the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ falls in with the rest of His history so simply and easily, as to commend it to Christian belief as an important and necessary

truth. It is hoped that this may be the result of the following discussion.

The first, and in some sense the most important, remark to be made is this, that the article is omitted from many other forms of the Christian Creed. It may be well to refer in illustration to that form with which the reader will be most familiar, namely, the Nicene Creed, as recited in the English Liturgy. It will be remembered that in that Creed the following articles occur: *He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures.* All reference to a descent into hell is omitted. The reason need not be here inquired; though, perhaps, it may be fair to conclude that an article not contained in so great and notable a Creed as that of Nicæa, can scarcely be of equal importance with those cardinal verities which all Christian Creeds contain. It does not follow from the omission of an article from an early Creed that the truth involved in the article was not held by Christians at the time of the promulgation of the Creed in question. The truth may even have been discussed by Christian writers of the period. All that can fairly be concluded is this, that at the time no Church had thought it necessary to give to the article that peculiar prominence, which is implied by its being singled out for special recognition by those who desired to be admitted into the Church of Christ.

But the omission of the article is much more general than would appear from the preceding paragraph. The descent into hell, writes Bishop Pearson, 'hath not been so anciently in the Creed, or so universally as the rest. The first place we find it used in was the Church of Aquileia; and the time we are sure it was used in the Creed of that Church was less than four hundred years after Christ. After that it came into the Roman Church, and into others, and hath been acknowledged as a part of the Apostles' Creed ever since.' In a note Bishop Pearson expands this brief statement as follows:

It is not expressed in those Creeds which were made by Councils as larger explications of the Apostles' Creed: not in the Nicene Creed nor in the Constantinopolitan; not in that of Ephesus or



Chalcedon; not in those confessions made at Sardica, Antioch, Seleucia, Sirmium, &c. It is not mentioned in several confessions of faith delivered by particular persons; not in that of Eusebius Cæsariensis, presented to the Council of Nice; not in that of Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra, delivered to the Pope Julius; not in that of Arius and Euzoius, presented to Constantine; not in that of Æacius, Bishop of Cæsarea, delivered into the synod of Seleucia; not in that of Eustathius, Theophilus and Silvanus, sent to Liberius. There is no mention of it in the Creed of St. Basil, in the Creed of Epiphanius, Gelasius, Damasus, Mercarius, &c. It is not in the Creed expounded by St. Cyril (though some have produced that Creed to prove it); it is not in the Creed expounded by St. Augustine. . . . Indeed, it is affirmed by Rufinus that in his time it was neither in the Roman nor the Oriental Creeds. . . .<sup>1</sup>

All which being so, it may possibly be regarded as unfortunate that a statement of so mysterious a character, and capable (as experience has shewn) of being taken in very strange and mischievous senses, should have been added at any time or in any circumstances to the Church's Creed. It is possible, nevertheless, that the article in question may have an important meaning; and certainly it demands respectful consideration within the English Church, inasmuch as the doctrine contained has been deliberately adopted as one of the Thirty-nine Articles. 'As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also it is to be believed that He went down into hell.'<sup>2</sup>

In what sense is the descent into hell to be understood? Let us clear the way by reference to certain opinions which have been formed, and which it seems impossible to adopt as sound and true.

It has been suggested as the meaning of the article that Christ descended, not really, but virtually by the effects of His passion, into regions where lost souls are in keeping, that the benefits of His passion were applied to these lost

<sup>1</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. ii. p. 308. Amongst the Apocryphal Gospels is a curious document, entitled 'The Second Part of the Gospel of Nicodemus, or the Descent of Christ into Hell.' Tischendorf, *Evang. Apocrypha*, p. 368. Tischendorf is of opinion that this work is to be ascribed to the second century, and that it was written by a Jewish Christian, who was considerably imbued with Jewish theology, and not free from Gnostic ideas.

<sup>2</sup> Article III.

souls, and that He Himself is said in a figure to have been present where these benefits were extended and felt. This notion appears to be too flimsy and fanciful to bear discussion.

Another notion, which supposes the Lord to have actually gone into a place of torment, and there to have Himself suffered some of the pains and penalties of sin, is more than flimsy and fanciful; it may be characterised as revolting, outrageous, impossible. 'There is a worm that never dieth,' writes Bishop Pearson, 'which could not lodge within His breast; that is, a remorse of conscience, seated in the soul, for what that soul hath done: but such a remorse of conscience could not be in Christ.'<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of the torment of a soul consisting in anything else but separation from God; and how can such separation be believed possible, even for a moment, in the case of the Eternal Son? Any theory, which involves this belief in the remotest form, stands self-condemned.

It is easy to get rid of all difficulty, if we adopt the supposition that the descent into hell is in reality merely another mode of expressing the descent of the Lord's body into the grave. The word *hell* and the word *grave* are certainly sometimes taken to mean the same thing; and if we assume this to be so in the present case, all difficulty disappears. But the question would arise, if hell merely means the grave, why was the article introduced? If to say 'He descended into hell' is exactly equivalent to saying 'He was buried,' why not rest satisfied with the statement which has been already made? It seems impossible to answer this question; and we are driven to the conclusion, that there must be some intended force in the statement of the descent into hell, additional to that which is involved in the statement of the burial. On this point it may be well to quote Bishop Pearson, who writes thus:

It appeareth that the first intention of putting these words in the Creed was only to express the burial of our Saviour, or the descent of the body into the grave. But although they were first put in the Aquileian Creed to signify the burial of Christ, and those which had

<sup>1</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. i. p. 389.

only the burial in their Creed did confess as much as those which without the burial did express the descent, yet since the Roman Creed hath added the descent unto the burial, and expressed that descent by words signifying more properly hell, it cannot be imagined that the Creed, as it now stands, should signify only the burial of Christ by His descent into hell.<sup>1</sup>

In truth, have we not in this view of the matter a key to the difficulty? May not the newer phrase have been introduced for the express purposes of strengthening the older one, and of insuring the assignment of the most complete meaning to the burial of the Lord Jesus? Let us consider whether this may not have been so; or at all events let us consider whether the language, which speaks of the Lord's descent into hell, does not in fact emphasise and complete in a remarkable manner the statement, *He was dead and buried*. To be dead and buried may be regarded as a purely physical event. Death and burial may be asserted of any creature, whether brute or human. Yet to say of a man 'he is dead and buried,' and to say the same of a dog, are widely, deeply, infinitely different things. What happens to the dog? So far as we know, mere corruption, dispersion of gases, separation of material particles. What happens to the man? It is impossible to give a full answer in a few words: but certainly something infinitely different from mere corruption, and resolution into original material elements. *The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.*<sup>2</sup> Notice the terrible and emphatic contrast, which is implied by closing the rich man's history with his burial. No man's history can really close there. Now, may not the effect of the assertion of the descent of the Lord into hell, or Hades, or whatever word we adopt to express the condition of the soul of man after death, be this, namely, to declare the continued manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ? He became man by birth; He lived as a man; He died upon the cross, but He was a man still. His body was buried; and it was the body of a man. His spirit, which on the cross He commended into His Father's hands, passed away we

<sup>1</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. i. p. 382.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xvi. 22.

know not, and we cannot know, how or whither; but it was the spirit of a man, and whatever may be asserted concerning the spirit of a man may be asserted concerning the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. This seems to be an intelligible meaning; and not only intelligible, but important with reference to the complete and lasting manhood of Christ. 'Two whole and perfect natures,' according to the second of the Thirty-nine Articles, 'that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, *never to be divided.*' And so, although Jesus Christ was to rise again by the divine life which was in Him, He was a man still.

This view appears to be not essentially different from that which has been adopted by Bishop Pearson, and which is expressed as follows: 'We have shown the substance of the article to consist in this, that the soul of Christ, really separated from His body by death, did truly pass into the places below, where the souls of men departed were. And I conceive the end for which He did so was, that He might undergo the condition of a dead man as well as of a living. He appeared here in the similitude of sinful flesh, and went into the other world in the similitude of a sinner. His body was laid in a grave, as ordinarily the bodies of dead men are; His soul was conveyed into such receptacles as the souls of other persons use to be.'<sup>1</sup> The ground upon which Bishop Pearson builds this explication, namely, upon that one passage in the Psalm, *Thou shalt not leave My soul in hell, neither shalt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption*,<sup>2</sup> seems to be scarcely satisfactory: it is dangerous to rest a doctrine upon a single verse, especially when that verse occurs in the Old Testament, and when the words are those of prophecy. Moreover, there are other portions of the explication which can be scarcely accepted so completely as that already quoted: in this, as in some other cases, Bishop Pearson may perhaps be charged with having run too much into the material and the physical. He seems also to the present writer to have gone beyond the necessities of the case, and so to have more or less contradicted his own exposition as already quoted. Thus

<sup>1</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. i. p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xvi. 10.



he writes that 'by the descent of Christ into hell all those which believe in Him are secured from descending thither. He went into those regions of darkness that our souls might never come into those torments which are there:' language this, which it is hard to reconcile with the statement, that 'His soul was conveyed into such receptacles as the souls of other persons use to be.' Hence I venture to accept the explication of the great expositor of the Creed with reserve: and I would urge that the real value of the affirmation that Jesus Christ 'descended into hell' consists in this, that it asserts His perfect and continued manhood, not prying into secrets which have not been revealed, not pretending to peep behind that veil which hides the unseen world, but assuring us that whatever happens to the soul of any one of ourselves, that same thing happened to the soul of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

If this, or anything like this, be true, there can be no question as to the foundation upon which the article must stand. History is manifestly (as has been already intimated) out of court: reason may possibly put in a claim for some little share in the acceptance of the article; but only so far as this, that reason can allege no plea for the rejection of that which is affirmed. There is nothing in it contrary to reason, nothing in fact which does not seem to follow almost of necessity from the admission of the great cardinal truth of the Incarnation: the article may be not improperly regarded as the completion of the doctrine of the manhood of Christ.

But the claim of reason for a share in the acceptance of the article is so slight and so remote, that for practical purposes it

<sup>1</sup> When the above passage was written I did not recollect that Bishop Browne (*Art. III. Of the descent into hell*) had written as follows: 'It is to be lamented that Bishop Pearson, in his most learned and elaborate article on the descent into hell, should have written less lucidly than is his wont. In more passages than one, unless I greatly misunderstand him, he has contradicted himself. At one time he defines hell as the place of departed spirits, and makes our Lord's descent thither no more than a passing into the state of the dead. At another time he argues as if hell meant the place of torment, and says that Christ went there to save us from going thither, for which he quotes Tertullian, who, however, mentions the opinion only to condemn it.' I am glad, in venturing to qualify the statement of Bishop Pearson, to find that I have the learned Bishop of Winchester on my side.



may be usefully put on one side. The most that it can do is to conclude, that if the Incarnation be not unreasonable, neither is the descent into hell. Therefore, perhaps, it may be wise to relegate the case wholly to faith. We believe the descent into hell as, and because, we believe that Jesus Christ came down from heaven: it is part and parcel of the same great scheme. We cannot logically prove either the one or the other; but the prophetic, the moral, the spiritual, the whole cumulative argument in favour of belief in Christ are so strong, that His disciples accept Him with their reason, as they love Him with all the affection of their hearts; and, accepting Him as that which He Himself professed to be, they believe all the constituent elements of His wondrous story.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *The third day He rose again from the dead.*

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ may be, in a certain and very true sense, regarded as the central point and pivot of the Christian faith. When the earliest assembled body of disciples, the mustard seed of the Christian Church, met in Jerusalem after the Ascension, their first and chief care was to elect into the place in the Apostolic College, left vacant by the desertion of Judas Iscariot, one who should be *a witness of the Lord's resurrection*.<sup>2</sup> And throughout the whole series of Apostolic writings there is no one single incident in the history of Christ, which is so constantly and so earnestly insisted upon, as a fact, as a practical argument, and as a ground of doctrine, as the resurrection from the dead on the third day. The wonderful birth, the miracles, the teaching, the habits of life, the general character of the Lord and His ministry, are not brought forward in the manner in which

<sup>1</sup> I have not referred to 2 Pet. iii. 18, in which the Apostle speaks of our Lord *preaching to the spirits in prison*. The words are discussed by Bishop Pearson, who writes, 'This did our Church first deliver as the proof and illustration of the descent, and the ancient Fathers did apply the same in the like manner to the proof of this article. But yet these words of St. Peter have no such power of probation.' Vol. i. p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 22.

some readers of the New Testament might expect them to have been; while the resurrection receives a recognition, which perhaps might have been as little expected, but which is an undoubted fact, as every student must have observed. It is clear that the early preachers of the Gospel of Christ reserved for this article of the Creed one of the chiefest places, if not the supreme place, in their doctrinal system: it would be presumptuous to question their wisdom, which has in fact been practically acknowledged by the Church from the beginning till now.

The belief in this article of the Creed may be regarded as resting upon two grounds. It has been marked with the symbols H. and F.; that is to say, the foundations will be alleged to be history and faith jointly. It may be maintained, and some writers do maintain, that in this article history stands alone;<sup>1</sup> that the resurrection may take its stand as a simple historical fact, certified by testimony as any other fact may be. And undoubtedly this view of the case may be speciously maintained, nor has the present writer any desire to weaken the historical testimony: let it be marshalled in all its strength, and the most sceptical will be compelled to admit that its strength is very great indeed. But, when all has been said and done, we have to recognise the supernatural transcendental character of the fact with which we have to do; we have to acknowledge that we are in a miraculous region, and that ordinary historical testimony may therefore fail to manifest its full power of conviction, unless it can be supplemented by arguments belonging to a different department of thought, arguments resting upon that which is described as faith. This subject has already been touched upon in connection with the first miraculous incident of the Lord's history rehearsed in the Creed, namely, the Virgin birth: the need of joining history and faith in a strong defensive alliance should

<sup>1</sup> Thus, Dr. Harvey writes in his *History and Theology of the Three Creeds*: 'The preceding article of our Lord's descent into hell results naturally from faith in the human nature of Christ; the present rests upon testimony that is purely historical.' He adds, however, that 'there is no antecedent presumption that can make it incredible.'

be carefully borne in mind in discussing all parts of the Lord's earthly history.

Let us consider then, in the first place, the historical aspect of the Lord's resurrection from the dead.

Bishop Pearson remarks that 'whatever variations have appeared in any of the other articles, this part of Christ's resurrection hath been constantly delivered without the least alteration, either by way of addition or diminution.'<sup>1</sup> This constancy of tradition in the Creed corresponds to the absolute certainty that from the very beginning the disciples of Christ believed in His resurrection, and that they published it far and wide as one of the chief truths which they were charged to make known to the world.<sup>2</sup> Let us notice the testimony of the four Gospels, all of which agree in recording the resurrection, as they all agree in recording the death. It is at once conceded that the accounts, as given by the four Evangelists, apparently differ in details, and are not easy to reconcile completely with each other. It will not be attempted here to exhibit a complete reconciliation; but it may be remarked, in the first place, that variation between themselves is a phenomenon common to almost all independent records of events, especially when they are great and stirring; and in the second place, that if the records of the four Evangelists had exhibited no kind of variation, it would have been difficult to resist the conclusion that they were not independent, and therefore the strength of their testimony would have been diminished, not increased. The case, as regards the testimony of the Gospels, stands as follows:

In St. Matthew, the whole of chapter xxviii. is given to the story.

<sup>1</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. i. p. 419.

<sup>2</sup> 'The history of the resurrection of Christ,' writes Paley, 'is a part of the evidence of Christianity, but I do not know whether the proper strength of this passage of the Christian history, or wherein its peculiar value as a head of evidence consists, be generally understood. It is not that, as a miracle, the resurrection ought to be accounted a more decisive proof of supernatural agency than other miracles are; it is not that, as it stands in the Gospels, it is better attested than some others; it is not for either of these reasons that more weight belongs to it than to other miracles, but for the following, namely, that it is completely certain that the Apostles of Christ and the first teachers of Christianity asserted the fact.' (*Evidences*, Part II., chap. viii.)

In St. Mark, nearly the whole of chapter xvi. If we put out of sight the last twelve verses, concerning the genuineness of which doubts have been expressed,<sup>1</sup> then this Gospel closes with the announcement of the resurrection.

In St. Luke, the lengthy concluding chapter xxiv., with the exception of the last three verses, which record the Ascension, deals with the resurrection and with certain events which followed it.

In St. John, chapter xx., which has the appearance of having been originally intended to close the book, is entirely given to this subject; and chapter xxi., which has the appearance of a subsequent addition or appendix to the Gospel, gives particulars concerning certain events which happened after the Lord rose from the dead.

The reader who would wish to form a just estimate of the combined value of the testimony of the Evangelists, to which reference has now been made, should study the records both separately and in connection with each other. As has already been intimated, he may find it difficult or impossible to reconcile the statements upon every single point; but he will find also much for which it is as difficult or as impossible to account, except upon the hypothesis that the Evangelists are bearing testimony to a true story. Moreover, he will discover points in the narrative, (like the touches of an artist which mark an original picture,) of that kind which produces a growing conviction of genuineness. Let me call attention to an instance, by way of illustration. In St. Luke, we read that Jesus joined two disciples who were going to Emmaus on Easter day, *but their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.*<sup>2</sup> We are told further that the Lord walked with and talked to them, and eventually *went in to tarry with them;*<sup>3</sup> and that, as He sat at meat with them, *their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight.*<sup>4</sup> In this interview we may note that the Lord's person was at first sight not recognised by the disciples, that after a time and in

<sup>1</sup> It is scarcely necessary to say that there is no intention of expressing in this place an opinion upon the merits of the controversy: but see p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 16.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 29.

<sup>4</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 31.



special circumstances it was recognised, and that when once recognised the disciples had not the smallest doubt as to the identity. Having got this clue we shall find that it seems to have been a law of the post-resurrectional appearances, that recognition was in the first instance not clear, but soon became so, and then was unalloyed by doubt. Thus, in the appearance to Mary Magdalene, as recorded by St. John, *When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.*<sup>1</sup> Once more, in the appearance recorded in the last chapter of St. John, we read, *When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*<sup>2</sup>

Again, there seems to be a connection between the post-resurrectional appearances of the Lord Jesus and the first day of the week, which became speedily consecrated as the Lord's day. It has been suggested that all, or almost all, the appearances took place upon this day: this, however, is perhaps a broader conclusion than the indications of Gospel history warrant. But that there is some kind of connection between the first day of the week and certain special post-resurrectional appearances of the Lord seems to be highly probable. Thus we read that *the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*<sup>3</sup> Thomas was not present on this occasion; but *after eight days again*—that is, on the next Lord's day—*His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.*<sup>4</sup>

Once more, notice the feature in our Lord's life after the resurrection, which is brought to light by the preceding quota-

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 14-16.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xx. 19.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xxi. 4.

<sup>4</sup> St. John xx. 26.



tions, namely, His supernatural appearance in the midst of the disciples, and His equally supernatural disappearance: coming and going according to supernatural laws, while yet He took pains by touch, by speech, by eating and drinking, to demonstrate that it was He Himself and not a mere spirit. *A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.*<sup>1</sup>

These remarks are made, not as a complete demonstration, but as hints for the study of the Gospel narratives. Careful study has convinced myself, and may perhaps convince the reader, that the Evangelists testify to that which they believed to be true, and that their testimony is given in such a manner as to make it difficult to understand how it could have assumed the form which it now has, except upon the hypothesis of the reality of the fundamental fact.

The value of the unanimous testimony of the four Evangelists to the resurrection is enhanced by a circumstance, which is patent from their biographies of the Lord, namely, that His disciples did not in the least expect it. He is recorded to have hinted, and more than hinted, several times at such an event; but almost always the remark is added, that the disciples did not understand what was meant, and that it was not till after the resurrection had taken place that they perceived what the meaning was. Thus St. Luke records that when, after telling the twelve of His approaching death, He added *and the third day He shall rise again, they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.*<sup>2</sup> And on another occasion we read that they understood not the saying, and *were afraid to ask Him.*<sup>3</sup> At the same time, there is no appearance of any conspiracy or collusion for the purpose of deceiving mankind, and palming upon them an apotheosis of Him who was crucified. It is as clear as anything can possibly be, that in the crucifixion the disciples saw the destruction of their hopes and the ruin of their Master's cause: upon no one did the news that the Lord was risen come as a surprise more completely than upon themselves.

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 39.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xviii. 33, 34.

<sup>3</sup> St. Mark ix. 32.

Thus a strong historical argument for the truth of the resurrection may be constructed upon the basis of the four Gospels.

But this is not all. The historical book which in the New Testament follows the Gospels begins (as it were) with the publication of the resurrection. Historically it may be said to begin with the Ascension, for the author takes up the thread at the point at which as an Evangelist he left it: but the first great event recorded in the history of the Church is the election of Matthias into the place of Judas, that he might with the eleven faithful Apostles be a *witness of the resurrection*—an event to which reference has been already made. So that to bear witness to the resurrection may be described as the main and signal idea of the Apostolic office. And thus it was that on the day of Pentecost, in the first sermon preached by the Church of Christ to the world, St. Peter made the resurrection of the Lord his great subject of discourse. *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*<sup>1</sup>

Examine the whole of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and it will be seen that the same great thought runs through their ministry. The Apostles preached Christ not so much in the character of a great Teacher, or of a worker of miracles—all this seems, as it were, to be assumed, or to be treated as something which would easily be accepted if the main difficulty could be cleared away—they preached Him rather as *Christ crucified*, and *Christ raised again for our justification*:<sup>2</sup> *raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father*:<sup>3</sup> *raised from the dead according to my Gospel*.<sup>4</sup> There are many other expressions of the same kind. And so far as the worship of Christians was concerned, it resolved itself into a celebration of their Lord's death, which would have been utterly intolerable, certainly never could have been regarded as a feast of the highest and most spiritual joy, if it had not been accompanied by the celebration at the same time of the signal triumph over death, which the rising from the dead supplied.

Let it be added that the very day upon which the Eucharist

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iv. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. vi. 4.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 8.

was celebrated in primitive times, was a constant tradition of the resurrection. The disciples *came together upon the first day of the week to break bread*,<sup>1</sup> that is, to celebrate the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's death. But the first day did not mark the actual death, neither was it the day of the week upon which the Holy Sacrament was instituted. It might have been thought that one of these days would have been more appropriately chosen: but not so; the special day of the celebration of the broken body and the shed blood was from the very beginning, and is till now, and doubtless ever will be, the day upon which, according to the belief of the Church, Christ rose from the dead, and upon which the heaviness of the night of sorrow and suffering gave way to the morning of exultation and joy.

The apologetic value of the uninterrupted celebration of the Eucharistic Feast upon the Lord's day has probably not always been fully recognised.<sup>2</sup> Yet it is very great, and will grow in proportion as it is studied. It will not, however, be further dwelt upon in this place.

Let us pass on to the Epistles. All that we find in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles prepares us for that kind of treatment of the resurrection, which manifests itself throughout the Apostolic Epistles. To say that the resurrection is constantly recited and everywhere assumed and built upon as a foundation-stone, is to say that which the most cursory reading of the New Testament abundantly verifies. But it

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 7.

<sup>2</sup> See Sir W. Muir's tract, 'The Lord's Supper an abiding witness to the death of Christ' (*Present Day Tracts*, vol. vi.). See also *The Evidential Value of the Holy Eucharist*, by the Rev. G. F. Maclear, D.D. (S.P.C.K.). This latter volume has the following introductory paragraph: 'It is said of Lord Lyndhurst that shortly before his death he was found by a friend with a pile of sceptical books upon his table. Taking up one of them, he remarked that it might seem strange for him to be so occupied, but that his mind required exercise, and that on the main issue his conviction was decided. *Of evidence, at least*, he said, *he felt he was as competent a judge as most men; and such evidence as might be adduced for the Resurrection had never broken down.* What this consummate judge of the value of evidence said respecting the fact of our Lord's Resurrection is here applied to one of the most powerful witnesses to it, the institution and continued celebration of the Holy Eucharist.'

is not perhaps always observed as clearly as it should be that the frequent reference to the fact of the rising again of our Lord from the grave is thrown into strong relief by the absence of all mention of many other things recorded in the Gospels. If any reader of the Gospels in our own days were asked to say what was the most conspicuous feature in their history, he would probably reply, the parables and the miracles of Christ. Or if he wished to recommend the teaching of Christ as that which was fitted to regenerate the world, he would probably take his stand upon the Sermon on the Mount. It may be added, that in all probability few would be found to condemn the judgment thus formed. And yet in the Epistles there is little direct reference to the Lord's teaching, whether on the Mount or elsewhere; and His miracles—exclusive of the one great miracle of the resurrection—have no place at all. It is unnecessary to discuss this peculiarity here; but it is essential to recognise it, in order that we may rightly appreciate the frequent reference to the resurrection, and perceive how much it means. Putting aside other views as to its doctrinal importance, we may clearly conclude as much as this, that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ involved potentially the very Gospel which the Apostles had to preach; the Lord of the Apostles was emphatically a risen Lord. It was impossible for them to give their message, to do their work of reformation, to establish the kingdom of God in the world, without assuming and asserting at every step the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The Epistles of St. John and St. James may seem to be exceptions to the rule that has been here laid down. It may be said with truth, that these Epistles do not contain pointed and frequent references similar to those which characterise the Epistles of St. Paul. But so far as St. John is concerned, it may be fairly argued that the whole doctrine of the Creed concerning Christ, including his triumph over death, is involved in such language as that in which he refers to the Word of Life, *which we have seen with our eyes, which we have*



looked upon, and our hands have handled;<sup>1</sup> to the blood which cleanseth from all sin;<sup>2</sup> and to the propitiation made for the sins of the whole world.<sup>3</sup> References such as these could scarcely have been made by any one who did not hold all which the Gospels declare. Moreover, if the Epistles bearing St. John's name were written (as there is every reason to believe that they were) by the Evangelist of the fourth Gospel, we see in the Epistles the reflexion of the Gospel, and we may assume that he who indited the former was filled with thoughts of that resurrection which the latter so distinctly records.

With reference to the Epistle of St. James, the sparseness of direct reference to our Lord is one of its most remarkable features. The name of the *Lord Jesus Christ* occurs only twice in the epistle. Yet even here there is a reference to the death of Christ in the pathetic words, *Ye have condemned and killed the Just*, and then another to the *coming of the Lord*,<sup>4</sup> which plainly intimate that the writer looked upon the death of the *Just One*, not as the ruin and destruction, but as the veritable strength and foundation, of faith and hope, which, upon the supposition of a resurrection, it would be.

It should be noticed that, in speaking of the resurrection, as he does so abundantly and so forcibly in his Epistles, St. Paul does not stand upon the same ground as the rest of the Apostles. He could not speak as a witness in the same sense as St. Peter and St. John; he claims, however, not merely to have delivered what he had himself received, but also to have had extraordinary visions of the risen Lord. He enumerates the several appearances which had been reported to him, and then adds, *last of all, He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time*.<sup>5</sup> It is not necessary to discuss the precise nature of the revelation made on the road to Damascus, or of that vision of the Lord in a trance which took place subsequently in the Temple; nothing depends, so far as the present argument is concerned, upon the nature of these communications; it is sufficient that St. Paul, a contemporary, one who had possibly,

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 1.<sup>2</sup> 1 John i. 7.<sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 2.<sup>4</sup> James v. 6, 7.<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 8.



or even probably, seen Jesus Christ in the flesh, though not following Him, or recognising Him as Lord, and as one who consorted with the Lord's actual companions, wrote as he did concerning the resurrection, and was prepared at any moment to sacrifice his life for the truth of his assertions.

Lastly, the Book of Revelation is all bright and radiant with resurrection light. He who appears to St. John in his vision announces His presence in these words: *I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.*<sup>1</sup> The worship of a *Lamb as it had been slain*,<sup>2</sup> and the striking reference to *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*,<sup>3</sup> imply something beyond mere death. The message to the Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans contains the promise, *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.*<sup>4</sup> In fact, the whole book is manifestly a vision of a risen and ascended Christ; and it concludes with the announcement that He will come again quickly—an announcement which seems to contain in itself all the mystery of the Lord's life, for He who had not lived again after death and gone into heaven could not have promised to return.

Now let the reader note what it is, that is asserted in the foregoing paragraphs. It is this, that the doctrine of the Lord's resurrection entirely possessed the minds of the Apostles and primitive disciples of Jesus Christ. To them it was not merely a remarkable fact, the evidence of which they believed to be upon the whole convincing; but it was to them a living truth, in which they held all mankind to be interested, which all sorts and conditions of men ought to know, and which they, the Apostles and primitive disciples, were determined that all men should know, so far as they, acting as they believed under a divine commission and assisted by divine power, could bring about the result. Had the assertion of the Lord's resurrection involved nothing transcending ordinary experience, it might be fairly claimed that no alleged fact of ancient history stood upon a firmer basis. And though it is fully conceded, that in consequence of this transcendental character it is necessary to

<sup>1</sup> Rev. i. 18.<sup>2</sup> Rev. v. 6.<sup>3</sup> Rev. xiii. 8.<sup>4</sup> Rev. iii. 21.

say something more about it than has been already adduced, still it is equally true that we ought to hold fast to an historical foundation. The Apostles knew what they were doing when they bore their unanimous testimony: they knew what they were doing when they supported that testimony at the price of their lives: the most sceptical man who ever existed would be compelled to own as much as this, that if the thing alleged was not incredible in itself, it might justly claim to be accepted as true.

The question of course arises, if we do not accept the historical evidence of the resurrection, how are we to account for the phenomena presented to us by the facts of history? The Apostles certainly did preach that Christ had risen; they asserted that they had seen Him, and that not unfrequently. It is difficult to suppose that they did not believe what they preached. How are we to account for this, except upon the supposition that the Lord did rise indeed? Several answers have been attempted to this question.

First, there is the supposition that the whole thing was a fraud, and that the disciples stole the body, according to the report set on foot by the Jews. It is unnecessary to discuss this solution, because it has been abandoned by the most sceptical critics, even in Germany.

Secondly, it has been suggested that the Lord did not really die, and that after being taken down from the cross He revived. This suggestion it is difficult to reconcile with any reasonable views of the effects of crucifixion; but, besides this, it involves deceit and falsehood on the part of the disciples, as truly as the supposition of the stealing of the body; and the whole history of their subsequent lives and ministry makes it impossible to regard them simply as lying impostors.

Thirdly, there is a more recent suggestion, which may be described as the vision hypothesis. According to this, the Lord did not truly rise; but an impression was made upon the minds of the disciples, something like that which is supposed to exist in the case of persons who are said to have seen the forms of departed friends. It is curious that our Lord should Himself have seemed to anticipate this view in the words addressed to

the Apostles: *Handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have.*<sup>1</sup> Moreover the vision-hypothesis does not explain the asserted absence of the Lord's body from the tomb. In fact, it is as certain as anything can be that the hypothesis of a vision does not meet the requirements of the case.

One of the most laborious investigators of this question, Keim, after discussing all the preceding hypotheses and demonstrating their insufficiency, concludes by professing his inability to explain our Lord's departure. And indeed it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to explain it, unless we adopt the solution of Holy Scripture and of the Creed, and say that He rose again the third day from the dead.

It is, however, necessary, as has been already remarked, to say something concerning the resurrection beyond that which has been hitherto adduced. Consequently this article of the Creed has been marked with the symbol F., as well as with the symbol H.: that is to say, faith must come in where historical evidence may in a certain sense be alleged to be insufficient.

'Oh! then,' says the man of nineteenth-century discernment, the man who is up to the level of the age in which he lives, 'what you mean is this: your history breaks down, and then you take refuge in what you call faith.' This is not, even approximately, what is meant. It is not in the least conceded that our history breaks down; it is contended that the historical evidence for the resurrection of Christ is greater than that adduced for almost any other reputed fact whatever. But it is submitted that when a fact is alleged, for which much, and apparently much perfectly sound, evidence can be produced, but which is nevertheless strange and unusual, it is right to consider whether there be any special features in the fact alleged, or any special characteristics in the evidence produced, which may help to determine whether the fact is to be accepted or not. We instinctively apply this kind of test of credibility in ordinary matters. Suppose it to be stated that when it was announced to the Princess Victoria on the death of King

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 39.

William IV. that she was Queen of England, the young Queen heard of her title to the throne for the first time. It would be difficult to believe this; well nigh impossible: still there would be no essential impossibility, and if the thing were reported on sufficient testimony it might be accepted as true. But suppose it were stated that some man had grown six inches in as many hours, the story would be at once put aside as fabulous. We should scarcely think it necessary to resort to actual proof in order to contradict the tale. And so, in reality, it is with the greater number of both mediæval and modern alleged ecclesiastical miracles; sometimes, perhaps, pious fraud, and sometimes the action of natural causes under unusual conditions, may be regarded as the true explanation of that which is supposed by enthusiastic votaries to be due to the interposition of some departed saint: the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, and the appearance of the Blessed Virgin to a peasant girl at Lourdes, with all that has followed, may be taken as illustrations. In such cases it may be urged, that respect for the memory and the reputation of the departed saint would incline a sober and devout mind to reject the alleged miracles, as being unworthy of the character of the person to whose intervention they are attributed. For my own part, I shrink from all that we have heard of late years of the appearance of the Blessed Mother of our Lord in France and elsewhere, not because I am deficient in respect towards her who is *blessed among women*, but because the doings attributed to her seem to me so unworthy of her character and high position that to believe them amounts to an insult. It is possible, however, to conceive of events set in such surroundings and connected with such important issues, that we feel ourselves justified in accepting them upon good evidence, even though they be of a nature to transcend our ordinary experience of human things. It may not be easy to define exactly the kind of events of which this should be predicated; any attempt to do so may end in failure. But without attempting a definition, it may be said with confidence, that we must to some extent judge of the credibility of an alleged extraordinary event from its surroundings, and that the surroundings of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ



are of a kind to make it credible, that its events would in many and various ways transcend ordinary experience.

Apply the principle which has been now expounded to the case of the resurrection of our Blessed Lord.

First and chiefly, it seems to be potentially involved in the idea of the Incarnation. The mystery of the Incarnation has already been considered in its proper place. If the Incarnation be rejected as impossible, the whole question falls to the ground. If Jesus of Nazareth was merely and simply a man like ourselves, it may be frankly admitted that it would be intensely difficult to accept the doctrine of a resurrection from the dead; and, moreover, the value of the doctrine when accepted would seem not to be of the first order of magnitude. You try to prove by historical evidence the allegation that Jesus Christ, who was crucified, lived again after having been dead and buried; but what then? What are we to do with our historical fact when we think we have proved it? Or rather, is it likely that the proof of a resurrection of this kind will ever be able to assert any practical power? If, on the other hand, the doctrine of Jesus Christ being, according to the phraseology of St. John's Gospel, *The Word, which was with God and was God, and which was made flesh and dwelt amongst us*,<sup>1</sup> be accepted as congruous to reason and answering to the cravings and aspirations of humanity, then the corollary that the flesh assumed by the Word of God *did not see corruption*<sup>2</sup> appears easy and simple.

Again, the relation in which the whole human race stands to death, the hope of immortality which rises in thoughtful minds, and which illuminates the world and helps to the understanding of its mysteries, the desire for some victory over the grave on the part of every man who calmly and unflinchingly contemplates death—all this seems to indicate, that a resurrection from the grave on the part of One who claimed to be the Deliverer and Saviour of mankind would be the best proof conceivable that He really was what He claimed to be. Jesus asserted Himself upon one remarkable occasion to be *the*

<sup>1</sup> St. John i, 1 and 14.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 31.



*Resurrection and the Life,*<sup>1</sup> and He sealed this claim by calling Lazarus to a renewed residence in this world. His own rising again by the power of God, because His flesh was incapable of corruption, may be regarded as a much more remarkable seal put upon the words. And this view is supported and confirmed by the language of St. Paul. *Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*<sup>2</sup> That is to say, the resurrection of Christ is not an isolated fact, or a mere self-contained miracle; but it is an event in which mankind are concerned as a race, because Christ's victory over the grave is a victory over death in general, and the resurrection of Christ is the potential resurrection of the whole family of man whose nature He assumed. *Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.*<sup>3</sup>

Nor should it be forgotten that this grand incident in the earthly career of the Lord Jesus Christ was plainly intimated by Him, and that not unfrequently, in the course of His teaching. This was the thing, which, perhaps above all others, tended to bring home the resurrection as a solid truth to the minds of the disciples, after it had actually taken place. *He taught His disciples*, writes St. Mark (there are many other passages in the four Gospels to the same effect), *and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him.*<sup>4</sup> To have puzzled over an enigma and at last to be told what the solution is, tends to impress both enigma and solution upon the mind more strongly than if, when the enigma was first propounded, a guess had been immediately and successfully made. So it was with the disciples of the Lord Jesus. They followed Him in His humble, weary ministry; they listened with wonder and delight to His teaching; they marvelled at His power; and above all (it may be presumed)

<sup>1</sup> St. John xi. 25.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 20-22.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. i. 10.

<sup>4</sup> St. Mark ix. 31, 32.

they were held in awe by the grandeur of His character, and by His quiet and loving yet undoubted assumption of superiority. But, after all, their feelings were much like those of men wandering in the dark, or at best in the twilight: there were so many things which they could not understand: sometimes, as we have seen, *they were afraid to ask Him*: and sometimes when they did ask, the answer had the effect of exhibiting darker and deeper depths still: perfect confidence in Him as their Master and Teacher was the only anchor of their lives. Then came the betrayal, the trial, the crucifixion; and there seemed to be nothing left but blank despair. *We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel*;<sup>1</sup> and that trust was crucified and destroyed. In the midst of this darkness came the resurrection. It rose upon the disciples' minds like the sun after the dark night in the tropics: all was suddenly bright, all was coherent, all was clear: the resurrection solved the enigma, which they had so often tried to guess: and, therefore, though they were conceivably as sensible as ourselves to the difficulty of belief in a rising from the grave of one who was dead and had been buried, they accepted this great miracle as the complement to the story of the cross, as their future guide in the darkness of this world, and as the basis of their whole ministry.

Still further, it should not be omitted, in considering the credibility of the doctrine of the resurrection of the Lord, to note that as a matter of fact the Church did somehow in the great controversy succeed in conquering the world, and bringing it under the yolk of this apparently strange belief. Let the reader try to conceive the probability or improbability of success attending the efforts of a small company of men to persuade the world, or any considerable portion of it, that a certain good man, who was crucified as a malefactor on false evidence at Jerusalem, and had been buried after crucifixion, had really risen again from the dead. The improbability would seem to be almost infinite: the probability *nil*. Yet the improbable result was that which actually took place: it is quite certain, certain

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 21.

beyond all possibility of contradiction, that the story of the resurrection gradually increased its hold upon the intellect of the world, until it attained a position in which this at least could be asserted, that many of the highest intellects have thrown in their lot with the simple, and have joined with them in the joyful acknowledgment that *the Lord is risen indeed*.<sup>1</sup>

Looking upon the whole subject in such ways as have been suggested, we seem to see a rational manner in which faith may come in to the aid of historical testimony. The doctrine of the resurrection appears in such company, that we cannot treat it merely and purely as an allegation, to be made good in a court of law by the examination and cross-examination of witnesses. Few books have made a less favourable impression upon the present writer's mind than Dean Sherlock's once well-known book 'The Trial of the Witnesses.' The vast interest of the greatest event, or one of the series of greatest events, in the spiritual history of our race, disappears in the dispute of a law court: the reader seems to feel that it is impossible that Almighty God could wish, that the revelation of His Gospel should be forced upon man's logical intellect by such means; and when, at the close of the trial, a proposal is made to the judge to accept a retaining fee on behalf of Lazarus, whose case is the next to be tried, the painful impression made by the work is complete. The trial of witnesses may carry us a certain distance, but not far enough; when they have given their evidence the witnesses must stand aside, in order that we may consider whether there is not a higher court—not exactly a court of appeal, but what may be called a court of review and of confirmation—in which may be found that supplementary support, which a statement so much bound up with the hopes of mankind requires, in order to give it its proper authority as an article of the Creed.

There is another and more general view of the resurrection of the Lord which ought to be exhibited before we pass away from this article.

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 34.

It is that which is suggested by the change brought about through Christian teaching—that teaching resting upon the doctrine of the resurrection—in the general tone of educated thought with respect to human life. If we think of mankind as a race of creatures placed upon the earth, with the task before them of educating themselves, and of solving the various problems which the world presents, it is clear that one of the earliest and most difficult questions would be the difference between man and every other living creature. That there is an exceedingly wide difference men would soon discover: they would find that their intellect gave them a commanding position, and that they were practically stronger than other creatures, possessed though the other creatures might be of enormously more physical force than themselves. And the question would rise sooner or later, whether there was not some essential distinction between the life of a man and the life of a beast, which would give to one an intrinsic value, and perhaps a durability, which did not apparently belong to the other. What direct teaching (if any) man received on such subjects in the infancy of his being it is impossible to say: the hints which Holy Scripture give us are very slight: but this is certain, that through all the early history of the Jewish Church the doctrine of a life to come is scarcely perceptible, and that the degree of knowledge, which was current when our Lord was upon earth, had been reached as the result of centuries of slow education, and was still in some degree matter of controversy. Outside the Jewish Church the darkness was much greater than within. Socrates, with his noble conclusions concerning a life beyond the poison cup, stands out almost by himself amongst educated Greeks; and amongst the Romans, before the coming of Christ, there was no Socrates. Seneca, who lived after that coming, but upon whom there is no proof that the light of Christ had shined, expressly justifies suicide. ‘Do you like to be wretched? Live. Do you like it not? It is in your power to return from whence you came. To ease the pain of the head you scruple not to bleed a vein; now there is no need of a much greater wound to reach the heart; you may open



to yourself a way to liberty by a single bodkin.'<sup>1</sup> So again the philosopher and emperor, Marcus Aurelius, writes: 'The house is smoky, and I quit it. Why dost thou think that this is any trouble? But so long as nothing of the kind drives me out, I remain, am free, and no man shall hinder me from doing what I choose; and I choose to do what is according to the nature of the rational and social animal.'<sup>2</sup> It is true that in some countries, Egypt especially, there was much religious belief concerning the future of human souls and the judgment which they will have to undergo: and for my own part I hail with pleasure all indications of such belief, as being a testimony either to a primitive tradition of immortality or to an instinctive perception of some truth concerning a future life. But if it be asked, what has popularised (so to speak) the doctrine of a future life, what has made the sense of immortality the common possession of all civilised mankind, so that it needs ingenuity and argument to drive out of men's minds the thought of a life and a judgment to come, instead of needing the same appliances to drive the thought into men's minds, then the answer must certainly be that it is the resurrection of Christ which has brought about the change. In this reflected sense it is true that we are all *risen with Christ*:<sup>3</sup> the triumph which He won has changed the average belief and feeling of the world concerning the character of human life and its future destiny.

Nor is the future destiny of men the only point involved. Even if a future life be a dream and a delusion, the stamp of high honour and value put upon human life by this noble dream and this blessed delusion is of unspeakable value with regard to man's earthly career. Plutarch, looking upon his heroes from a non-Christian point of view, can speak as an historian, like Seneca as a philosopher, with perfect absence of grief or shame of a man who has lived as long as he has thought it well to live, and has then committed suicide. No

<sup>1</sup> Epistle LXX. *On Life and Death*.

<sup>2</sup> *Thoughts of the Emperor M. Aurelius Antoninus*, translated by George Long, Bk. i. § 29.

<sup>3</sup> Col. iii. 1.



writer of high character would venture so to express himself in an age and country of Christian civilisation. It is assumed amongst ourselves that he who commits suicide is either very wicked or else mad: the choice of verdict lies between *felo de se* and *temporary insanity*: the tenure of life is regarded from a different point of view: man cannot take life up and lay it down as he pleases—it is a precious and solemn gift of God. That the change of feeling which is here pointed out really exists and dominates the modern world, will probably be generally conceded: perhaps it may not be so generally conceded, that the change is closely connected with the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, there is good reason for believing that it is so; and though the point is of a nature to exclude definite proof, the reader is requested to consider whether there is not much argument adducible in favour of the conclusion alleged. One thing is certain, namely, that it is impossible for anyone, who thinks of the resurrection of Christ as the Apostles did, to take anything but the highest view of human life, or to believe in anything less than eternal life in His presence and in the presence of God. This view and this belief were manifestly the constant food and support of the soul to St. Peter, St. Paul, and the rest, and they were connected with and grew out of the sense of constant living union with Him who had lived and died and lived again. Unbelievers may say that they were under a delusion; but concerning the fact of their belief, and the grounds of their belief, and concerning its strength and consistency, which persecution and ridicule could not shake, there is no doubt whatever.

If, then, I wish to present the broadest and most comprehensive argument in favour of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, I am disposed to seek it in the general aspect of human life and human death and human hopes in countries upon which the light of His Gospel has shined. That aspect is different in kind from that which existed in heathen lands in olden days, and which exists in unchristened lands still. It need not be asserted that there is no light at all in such countries; it would be ungracious to

deny, or even to depreciate, any light that lightens any part of the world, however imperfectly. But it is suggested that the light which shines in Christian lands is brighter and more leading than any other which the world has known, and that this light is to be traced chiefly, though it may be not solely, to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.



## CHAPTER VII

### ARTICLE VI

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, AND SITTETH ON THE RIGHT  
HAND OF GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY

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*So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up  
into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God—St. MARK xvi. 19*



A FRENCH BAPTISMAL CREED

CIRC. A.D. 900.

1. *Credis in Deum Patrem omnipotentem, Creatorem cæli et terræ ?*

*Credo.*

2. *Et in Jesum Christum, Filium ejus unicum, Dominum nostrum,*

3. *Natum,*

4. *Et passum ?*

*Credo.*

8. *Credis et in Spiritum Sanctum ;*
9. *Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam ; Sanctorum communionem ;*
10. *Remissionem peccatorum ;*
11. *Carnis Resurrectionem ;*
12. *Vitam æternam ?*

*Credo.*

*Harmonia Symbolica, p. 112.*

## CHAPTER VII.

## ARTICLE VI.

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, AND SITTETH ON THE RIGHT  
HAND OF GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY. (H., F.)

It is obvious that this article belongs chiefly, in some sense perhaps exclusively, to the region of faith. Neither reason nor human testimony can penetrate that spiritual country which we designate by the name of Heaven: the right hand of God, and all that is implied in that figurative phrase, are beyond human ken. Nevertheless, the article has an historical side which must by no means be disregarded, and which, in reality, cannot be disregarded by those who wish to gain a complete view of the foundations of the Apostles' Creed. Hence it has been marked with the letter H. as well as with F.

Let us begin by regarding our Lord's Ascension into heaven from the historical side. In doing so we must confine our attention to the first section of the article.

1. *He ascended into heaven.*

The most complete account of this event is to be found in the Gospel according to St. Luke.

*He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*<sup>1</sup>

By the side of this statement, the simple and unvarnished

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 50-53.

character of which must strike every reader, should be placed the other account, written subsequently by the same St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles.

*When He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly towards heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem.*<sup>1</sup>

It may be assumed that St. Luke was not an eye-witness of the supernatural event which he here records. The fact that he was not himself present may account for the difference between the two reports, upon which, if they had both claimed to rest upon eye-witness, an injurious criticism might have been passed. As it is, there can be no difficulty in understanding that the same historian, writing of an event on two separate occasions, may report it substantially in the same manner, but with somewhat different details.

This seems to have been what took place in the case of St. Luke's report of the Ascension. He was not an eye-witness; but there can be no reasonable doubt, that he has given us what was asserted at the time and believed to be true (so that in this as in other matters he had *perfect understanding of all things from the very first*), and that what he records was delivered to him by those who *from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word*.<sup>2</sup> Reference has already been made to the high and trustworthy character of St. Luke as an historian;<sup>3</sup> and on the strength of that character it may be asserted, that nothing short of a persuasion of the absolute incredibility of every event which involves a supernatural element can be alleged as destructive of the evidence given by this Evangelist, in favour of the truth of that which is described by the words, *He ascended into heaven*.

In addition to the testimony of St. Luke must be cited that

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 9-12.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke i. 2, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Chap. IV.

which is to be found in the concluding verses of the Gospel according to St. Mark. It is contained in the following words:

*So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.*<sup>1</sup>

In considering the force of this testimony great stress will not be laid upon the controverted question of the authenticity of the last twelve verses of St. Mark's Gospel. A vigorous and learned effort has been made of late<sup>2</sup> to establish the character of the verses as a true product of St. Mark's pen. Seldom has a more vigorous and learned effort been made, and it would be pleasant to believe that it has been quite successful: nevertheless, the impartial reader may, after the perusal of Dean Burgon's volume, feel that some appreciable amount of doubt still rests upon the question. However this may be, it must at least be conceded that the conclusion of the second Gospel, if not by St. Mark's own hand, undoubtedly contains an early testimony to the current belief of the primitive Church. In fact, the style of the verse which records the Ascension is calculated to suggest the notion, that the historian (whether St. Mark or any other person) is rather reciting a well-known and admitted truth, than professing to give the information for the first time.

For it will be observed that, so far as the historical fact of the Lord's Ascension is concerned, St. Mark's account is restricted to the words, *He was received up into heaven*, which are almost the words of the Apostles' Creed. There is nothing like the picture given by St. Luke in his Gospel, of the Lord being parted from the disciples as He was speaking to them, and the disciples worshipping Him and then returning to Jerusalem: still less like that other picture given in the Acts of the Apostles, where we have the record of the concealing cloud, and of the vision of the men in white apparel.

Let the reader peruse the three accounts one after another, and the difference which it is desired to point out will become more manifest. The accounts given by St. Luke may be spoken of as breathing the language of a history, the account

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark xvi. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *The last Twelve Verses of St. Mark*, by the late Dean Burgon.

given by St. Mark that of a creed. The distinction is marked by the particles *So then* ; as though the writer had said, 'Then took place that Ascension of the Lord, of which the reader has heard, and which all Christians believe.'

This feature of style may well be borne in mind in connection with the at first sight remarkable fact, that the Ascension is not recorded by either St. Matthew or St. John. How easy it is to found injurious conclusions upon this omission, and to ask whether it is probable that such an event if real could have been omitted by any historian of the life of Christ! It is difficult, perhaps, for anyone in modern days, and impossible for those who altogether disclaim allegiance to Christ, to realise the sentiment with which an Apostle, or, indeed, any earnest member of the primitive Church, would regard the Ascension of the Lord. To such Apostle or disciple, who had seen (as we may suppose) Jesus Christ in the flesh, had witnessed His crucifixion, and had been permitted either to see Him again after His Resurrection or to know that others had done so, the Ascension into heaven would have something of the character of an axiomatic truth, or at the least would harmonise with all else that he knew or believed. For if Christ had risen from the dead, as was universally held to be the case, and as many were assured by actual personal evidence, there was no alternative but to believe either that Christ had died a second time, which would be incredible to one who had accepted the truth of the first great triumph over death and the grave, or that He had been supernaturally removed; for no one maintained that He was still to be seen on earth in the flesh. What third course can be suggested? Thus the Ascension into heaven would seem to be the necessary sequel of the resurrection from the dead. Given this latter truth, the former or something equivalent to it must be a truth likewise.

Hence, the Ascension of Christ may be described as the truth in which the Apostles and martyrs 'lived and moved and had their being.' In all their sufferings here upon earth they could look up to heaven, like the first martyr, St. Stephen, and see Jesus standing at the right hand of God to succour



all those who suffer for Him.<sup>1</sup> His presence there was with them not a dogma to be argued about, or to be proved by documentary evidence, or to be regarded as depending upon the nicely balanced less or more of satisfactory human testimony; it was the very foundation upon which their whole lives were built. If Christ had not truly gone up on high, and if He was not at God's right hand for evermore, the whole fabric of the Gospel which they spent their lives in preaching vanished to their minds into empty air.

It is not contended that this view of the Lord's Ascension into heaven is sufficient, or to be deemed sufficient, to commend it as a truth to the minds of honest inquirers in our own days. The preceding remarks have been made chiefly in connection with the undoubted, and, as some may represent it, the strange phenomenon, that a record of the Ascension of Christ is wanting in two of the Gospels. Is it credible, a controversialist may not unfairly urge, that two men who were themselves companions and disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, would sit down to write a history of His life, and omit that event which, if it be true, is the most important and far-reaching of all? Is it to be believed that their Master was taken away, as St. Mark and St. Luke say that He was, and that St. Matthew and St. John either knew nothing about the Ascension, or, knowing about it, did not record it?

In reply to such questions it may be observed, in the first place, that there is no evidence that St. Matthew and St. John did (in the popular sense of the words) ever sit down for the purpose of writing their Master's life. With regard to one of them it is quite certain that he never did so. This is a point which should be carefully borne in mind by those, who would desire to draw safe conclusions from what they find in the four Gospels. Modern critics sometimes discuss these ancient documents as if they were recent biographies, written upon the principle of collecting all available materials for describing the life and sayings and doings of some illustrious deceased person, then arranging these materials, selecting the most

<sup>1</sup> Collect for St. Stephen's Day.

suitable, rejecting those which are less suitable, and finally inserting reflections, and suggestions, and conclusions, which may help the reader to form an estimate of the man's character, his influence upon his generation, or, it may be, upon the history of his country and of the world. Now it is obvious to anyone who examines the subject even cursorily, that whatever the Gospels may be and whatever their motive, they are not composed upon any such principle as this. The third, that attributed to St. Luke, is the only one that makes the smallest approximation to this kind of biography; and in this, as the reader is aware, we have the story of the Ascension inserted in its proper place. So far as St. John's Gospel is concerned, tradition tells us<sup>1</sup> that the Evangelist had seen the three former Gospels and approved them, but considered that a more detailed narrative of the early part of the ministry was required, and wrote his Gospel to supply the need. Internal evidence perhaps scarcely supports in its fulness the supposition of St. John's Gospel being supplementary to the other three: still, there is a good deal in it which points in this direction, and, indeed, it is impossible to understand its characteristic agreements with, and its characteristic distinctions from, the other Gospels, without supposing that in some degree it is intended to be supplementary, and that anyhow it assumes the existence of an earlier history. The partly supplementary character of St. John's Gospel accounts for omissions as well as for additions. It does not account for everything, nor is it likely that it should. A man takes his pen in hand for a particular purpose, and the knowledge of that purpose is a great help to the right understanding of the author's work: but it does not follow that this knowledge will explain the reason for the insertion of everything that the work contains. For example, the 'Wellington Despatches' are understood to have been published in consequence of the great Duke's dissatisfaction with the view given of his operations in Napier's 'Peninsular War;' and the knowledge of this fact may help the reader to appreciate the despatches, and enable him

<sup>1</sup> See Eusebius, *H.E.* iii. 24.

to understand, more clearly than he otherwise might, the doings of the Duke of Wellington and the history of the Peninsular War as well; but it does not at all follow, that the insertion of every despatch is to be explained by reference to Sir W. Napier's history. In reality, no theory has ever been devised, or is likely to be devised, which shall explain all the peculiarities of St. John's Gospel; but with regard to the particular point before us, namely, the omission of the Ascension, it may be asked, Is this omission more wonderful than that of the birth? What biography can there be without reference to the birth of the hero? Yet in the fourth Gospel there is nothing of the kind. Instead of it, or in the place which the birth would occupy in an ordinary biography, we have such words as these: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*<sup>1</sup> This mysterious passage may be said to contain St. John's version of the Nativity of Jesus Christ. A biography which opens in such a fashion can scarcely be expected to conform itself to ordinary rules.

Other omissions, which perhaps would not have been expected, might be cited. It is not necessary to do so in anything like an exhaustive manner; but there is just one, which is so very remarkable that it may claim a passing notice. Every reader of St. John's Gospel must have been struck by the omission of the history of the institution of the Lord's Supper. That this event took place can be doubted by no one, even the most sceptical. It can be as little doubted that in the opinion of the early Church, indeed of the Church in all ages, the institution was one of the principal and most notable facts in the Lord's history; and yet the account of the first celebration on the eve of the Passion is altogether absent from St. John's Gospel. The omission is all the more striking when we remember the

<sup>1</sup> St. John i. 1-5.

great particularity, far exceeding that of any one of the three synoptic Gospels, with which St. John records the events of the Lord's later life and His discourses before the crucifixion. It is not the purpose of this work to attempt to explain such points ; but certainly the omission of such an event as this forbids us to express surprise, when we find no mention in the fourth Gospel of the Ascension into heaven.

With regard to St. Matthew, it may be remarked that although his Gospel has much more of the character of a biography, in the ordinary sense of the word, than has that of St. John, still there is abundant evidence that whatever was the principle of its composition, it was something different from that which guides the action of ordinary biographers. The chief feature of the first Gospel is, in fact, the careful collection of the Lord's discourses. Some critics have imagined that it was originally a collection of discourses only, and that an editor, other than St. Matthew, enlarged the original document, and so produced the Gospel in its present form. This conclusion is incapable of proof ; but it must be acknowledged that there is something in the form and manner of the Gospel, which lends itself to a supposition of the kind. Whatever may be the truth with respect to this matter—to which reference is here made merely for the purpose of shewing, that for the present argument no special theory concerning the composition of the first Gospel needs to be insisted upon—there is nothing to indicate that this Gospel is a biography in the ordinary sense of the term. It is rather perhaps one of those ' memoirs of the Apostles ' of which Justin Martyr speaks, as having been read in the assemblies when the early Christians met together upon the Lord's Day to worship and to break bread. Viewing the first Gospel thus, it is impossible to predicate which portions of the Lord's ministry are likely to be included and which not : but with regard to the Ascension, nothing can be more clear than the fact that the truth of the event, though not formally included in the history, is assumed. Let it be observed how St. Matthew's narrative terminates. He records the resurrection and some circumstances connected with it. Then he tells us that the Lord met the eleven Apostles by



appointment on a mountain in Galilee; that there they saw Him and worshipped Him, although some doubted; then the Lord announced to them that all power was given to Him in heaven and in earth, and gave them a charge to evangelize the world, promising to be with them always. After this the curtain drops. But what subsequently became of the Lord? and how was it that those who doubted then never doubted any more? It is clear that something is wanting; the something wanting is the supernatural disappearance of the Lord, in other words, His Ascension into heaven. The necessary conclusion to the story could scarcely have been more plain, if the Evangelist had written it down, as St. Luke actually did.

This view of St. Matthew's conduct is all the more intelligible, when we remember that the belief in the Lord's Ascension was unquestionably current in the Church. The first Gospel, like all the rest, and especially like that of St. Luke, in which the fact is plainly asserted, was addressed not to unbelievers, but to those who already believed. Many Christians in the earliest age probably never had a copy of any one of the Gospels in their hands. They heard, they did not read; the general facts of the Lord's ministry were orally communicated; hearers were catechised, and having been baptized were admitted into the fellowship of the Church; and then, as members of the congregation, they would hear a portion of some memoir of the Apostles read on the Lord's Day, as we do now; but whether a definite account of the Ascension was ever read or not in any particular church, the knowledge of that great event would be the property of all who were catechised, and who were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. If the reader will only reflect upon this view of the relation in which Christians in early days stood, and in which Christians in all days stand, to the four Gospels, he will probably come to the conclusion, that not much weight is to be attached to the omission in particular Gospels of particular facts in the history of the Lord.

On the whole, therefore, the historical basis of the words 'He ascended into heaven' would seem to be something of the following kind:



*a.* The Ascension is distinctly asserted twice by St. Luke, whose claims to be regarded as a careful historian are capable of being substantiated by independent considerations, and ought to be admitted.

*β.* It is also asserted in the Gospel according to St. Mark ; and even if it be admitted that the probabilities are in favour of the last twelve verses of that Gospel being an addition by another hand, still that other hand is an early one, and not to be set aside as of no authority.

*γ.* The Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John, though they do not contain a direct account of the Ascension, nevertheless are not intelligible except upon the hypothesis that the writers assumed the truth of some supernatural fact, equivalent to that of which the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke contain the distinct assertion.

*δ.* Throughout the whole of the New Testament Scriptures the presence of the Lord in heaven is assumed ; these books cannot be interpreted without the assumption of the Ascension, or something equivalent to it.

*ε.* It is undeniable that the doctrine of the Ascension was recognised by Christians from the earliest times as a distinct part of the Church's teaching, whether written or traditional : there is no indication of any condition of the Christian society founded by Jesus Christ, in which this doctrine was not received.

In considering the Ascension of our Lord as an historical fact, depending like other historical facts upon human evidence, it is well to insert a caution against what may be described as materialistic views. The Ascension being in the nature of things an event transcending ordinary material laws, it must be conceded that it is not possible for human language completely to describe it. 'Ubi et quomodo,' writes St. Augustine, 'sit in cælo corpus Dominicum, curiosissimum et supervacaneum est quærere; tantummodo in cælo credendum est. Non enim est fragilitatis nostræ cælorum secreta discutere, sed est nostræ fidei de Dominici corporis dignitate sublimia et honesta sentire.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Fide et Symbolo*, vol. vi. p. 270.

But it will be observed that, according to the testimony of eye-witnesses, ordinary material laws were transcended as soon as Christ rose from the dead. The resurrection body of the Lord was in one sense the præ-resurrection body, and in another sense it was not. The Lord ate and drank with the Apostles after rising from the dead; they were permitted to handle Him and feel Him, so as to persuade themselves by the evidence of flesh and bones that He was not a spirit. Doubting Thomas was challenged to put his fingers into the wounds of His sacred hands, and to thrust his hand into the pierced side, and even Thomas was convinced of the personal identity; yet the post-resurrection person and presence of Christ were essentially different from what they were before. He came and went according to other laws than those, which were exhibited in His ordinary intercourse with mankind before His death. The disciples were assembled with closed doors, and lo! Jesus was suddenly in the midst of them. They could be in His company and talk with Him and not recognise Him, though their hearts might burn within them; and then He would break bread with them and vanish out of their sight. All this is familiar to everyone who reads the Gospels with any care. It is perhaps impossible precisely to define the difference between the præ-resurrection and the post-resurrection conditions of the Lord's body and life and manhood: it must suffice to say that there was a difference, and one of such a kind as to prevent us from attempting to apply to the post-resurrection condition of things the laws which apply to matter in general. Now it was the resurrection body, which, according to the testimony of the Apostles, was seen by human eyes to ascend: according to the language of St. Luke's Gospel, *He was parted from them*; <sup>1</sup> or according to the same writer in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, *He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight*.<sup>2</sup> With that cloud human testimony comes to an end; the eye of man cannot see behind it; the material cloud was but an emblem of the spiritual.

I the rather lay stress upon the considerations here advanced,

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 9.

because I am disposed to believe that any difficulty which may be felt, with regard to the Ascension of our Lord, will be intensified by the manner in which the meaning of this article of the Creed is summed up by Bishop Pearson. These are his words :

Upon these considerations we may easily conclude what every Christian is obliged to confess in those words of our Creed, *He ascended into heaven*: for thereby he is understood to express thus much, I am fully persuaded that the only-begotten and eternal Son of God, after He rose from the dead, did with the same soul and body with which He rose, by a true and local translation convey Himself from the earth on which He lived, through all the regions of the air, through all the celestial orbs, until He came unto the heaven of heavens, the most glorious presence of the majesty of God. And thus I believe in Jesus Christ who *ascended into heaven*.

I venture to suggest that the language here used is open to reasonable exception. The phrase 'true and local translation,' followed by the expressions 'through all the regions of the air,' and 'through all the celestial orbs,' and culminating in the words 'until He came unto the heaven of heavens, the most glorious presence of the majesty of God,' implies too much of material conception to be freely accepted, in days which are as familiar with the laws of matter as our own. Probably when the words were penned, the difficulty of receiving them as a proper exposition of the words of the Creed did not present itself: had it been otherwise, no mind would have been more likely to perceive the difficulty than that of Bishop Pearson: and I do not say that even in this generation, the language used may not be susceptible of an interpretation which shall not grate upon the educated mind. The notion of transition through the regions of the air, and through all the celestial orbs, into the presence of the majesty of God, may be interpreted poetically; and may, perhaps, be regarded as a dignified and forcible description of that final separation of the personal presence of Christ from this world, which commenced when the Lord was parted from His disciples, and the subsequent portion of which was concealed by the cloud: but it is only upon this

poetical hypothesis that the propriety of the language can be at all defended. There is an infinite impassable gulf between words which speak of 'local translation through the regions of the air,' and those which speak of that sublime immaterial spiritual reality, 'the most glorious presence of the majesty of God.'

When, therefore, we speak of the Ascension of Christ into heaven as an historical fact, we should take careful account of the manner in which the fact must be limited in order to its being so described. The assembled disciples saw their risen Lord for the last time upon earth: as they looked He was taken from them: then a cloud concealed Him from their sight: from that moment sight and therefore history ended, and the reign of faith began.

The preceding remarks may suitably introduce the consideration of the faith element, which is involved in the acceptance of the article now under discussion. It is obvious that there must be such an element: the mere parting from the disciples, to which they bore witness, to which we give credence on their testimony, and which may therefore be discussed as an historical event, is not co-extensive with the phrase 'He ascended into heaven.' 'He ascended'—this may be regarded as equivalent to the phrase of the Gospel, *He was parted from them*, or to that of the Acts of the Apostles, *He was taken up*: but 'into heaven'—this introduces a fact of another order; no human eye can penetrate the Holy of Holies. The meaning of the phrase 'into heaven,' and the truth that Christ ascended there, must alike rest upon faith as their foundation-stone.

If, however, a Christian believer has advanced safely in his belief as far as this point of the Creed, he will find no difficulty placed in his way by the article which we are now considering. For we have already recognised the truth of the Incarnation as being that which animates the whole Creed. The Ascension attributed to Christ is something differing altogether in kind from an apotheosis, such as men have sometimes conceived and perhaps believed. An apotheosis is the raising to the level and companionship of the gods of a man, who, by his great and heroic deeds, has deserved this honour. It is a reward for good things done upon earth, a recognition by gods and men of con-



spicuous worth and merit. Nothing can be more alien to the conception of the Ascension of Christ than this. Let the following passages of Scripture be a testimony that this is so, and likewise an intimation of what the true idea of the Ascension is:

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him.*<sup>1</sup>

The conception in this passage is manifestly that of voluntary descent to earth in the form of man, that is, Incarnation, attended by indignity and sufferings voluntarily undergone, and followed by a return to that divine home on high from which the descent took place. The earthly sojourn in the flesh is (as it were) a parenthesis between two heavenly eternities. Compare this with the Lord's own language as recorded by St. John.

*I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.*<sup>2</sup> Again, we have the words: *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world and go to the Father.*<sup>3</sup> Once more: reference may be made to that striking message sent to the disciples by the Lord after His resurrection, and spoken to Mary Magdalene. *Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God and your God.*<sup>4</sup> The conception involved in all these and the like passages would seem to be, that of a return home after doing a great work on earth. Assume the mighty fact of the Incarnation, and all is clear.

But it is not an isolated passage found here and there in the New Testament, to which an appeal should be made in this matter. The whole conception of Christ in the New Testament

<sup>1</sup> Philip. ii. 5-9.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xvi, 28.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xvii. 4, 5.

<sup>4</sup> St. John xx, 17.



and in the early Church is that of a living Lord, whom the eye of faith could see and could recognise as being the ascended Jesus Christ. The vision which was vouchsafed to Stephen in his martyrdom was, as it were, a type of that which was granted to the whole Church. *Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.*<sup>1</sup> And so it was that in the great apocalyptic vision St. John saw one *like unto the Son of Man*, who laid His right hand upon him, saying, *Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.*<sup>2</sup> Let any one read through the New Testament Scriptures, and ask himself whether the writing of them was possible, or is even conceivable, if the Apostles had not believed in a living Christ: whether they believed rightly or not, is not at this moment the precise question: we are dealing with the Ascension of Christ as a matter of faith, and it is manifestly of first-rate importance to ascertain what the earliest disciples actually believed, and concerning this there can scarcely be a doubt. The interpretation placed by them upon the Ascension of Christ may rightly be adopted by ourselves, as a guide to the understanding of this article of the Apostles' Creed.

Before leaving this point it may be well to remark that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews finds the Ascension of Christ, like other portions of His life and ministry, typified in the Jewish ritual. *When these things were thus ordained, he writes, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. . . . But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. . . . For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*<sup>3</sup> From

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 56.<sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 13, 17, 18,<sup>3</sup> Heb. ix. 6-24,

which quotation will be seen, not only how easily and naturally a learned Jew, converted to the faith of Christ, regarded his new religion as a development and fulfilment of the old in which he had been educated, but also how thoroughly the passing of Christ from earth to heaven formed, at the time when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, an essential portion of that which Christians believed. St. Paul would have maintained that, in adopting the teaching of the Church of Christ, he was in reality only adopting that which the law and the temple worship had prefigured. And so we read that at his lodging in Rome *he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.*<sup>1</sup> This seems to be the line of thought into which the mind of a Jew converted to the faith of Christ would of necessity run.

With regard to prophetical references to the Ascension of our Lord, it may be well to note what Bishop Pearson has written :

The Ascension was declared prophetically, as we read in the prophet David, *Thou hast ascended up on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, Thou hast received gifts for men* : which phrase *on high*, in the language of David signifying heaven, could be applied properly to no other conqueror but the Messias ; not to Moses, not to David, not to Joshua, not to any but the Christ ; who was to conquer sin, and death, and hell, and triumphing over them, to ascend unto the highest heaven, and thence to send the precious and glorious gifts of the Spirit unto the sons of men. The prophecy of Micah did foretell as much, even in the opinion and confession of the Jews themselves, by these words : *The breaker is come up before them : they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it : and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them.*<sup>2</sup>

It may be concluded that if there were other striking passages in the prophetical books of the Old Testament which could be referred to the Ascension of our Lord, Bishop Pearson would

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxviii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. i. p. 451.

not have omitted them; if so, the number is undoubtedly small, and of the two quoted by him there is only one, namely, that from the Psalms, which would perhaps forcibly strike the general reader. The language of the sixty-eighth Psalm is undoubtedly of a most striking kind. It should, however, be borne in mind that there is other prophetic language, which, though it does not touch so circumstantially upon the Ascension of our Lord, may be regarded as connected with His final triumph over death and the powers of this world. In fact, all intimations of a triumphant Messiah lend themselves to the fact of the Ascension. This great historical event may be regarded as the embodiment and fulfilment of prophetic hints, even when the words do not of necessity imply such an actual Ascension as that which the Gospels record. To take an example. The great Messianic prophecy which is contained in the fifty-third chapter of the book of Isaiah describes the persecution and death of Him to whom the prophecy refers, and yet after the death foretells a most signal triumph: *When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. . . . I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.*<sup>1</sup> Such language as this does not prophesy the Ascension; but it finds therein its fulfilment, and needs such an event as the Ascension was to the minds of the disciples, in order to render the words intelligible.

On the whole it may be asserted, that, while there is not much prophetic language in the Old Testament, which can be confidently quoted as having unquestionable reference to the Ascension, there are not a few passages which seem to look towards a glorification of the Messiah, which may be regarded as finding its realisation in the Ascension of Christ into heaven.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah liii. 10-12.

2. *And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.*

This second portion of the sixth article of the Creed has, from its very nature, no historical element in it. Its subject-matter transcends human experience and human testimony; it belongs to a region which eye hath not seen nor ear heard; it transports us in imagination to the very throne of God. Much, therefore, of that which has been said concerning the Ascension *into heaven* applies to the session at God's right hand, which is (as it were) the consequence and completion of the Ascension. Nevertheless, it is desirable that this second portion of the article should be treated separately, and that stress should be laid upon those points in which it adds to the force and meaning of that which goes before.

Speaking generally, it may be said that the second part of the article supplies an explanation of the result of the Ascension and of the reason why it took place. The language is of course figurative; it could not be otherwise: but the thought which pervades it is that of a king's son being sent on some great mission, performing that mission, and then returning to his father's house. Such a figure suits well with all that we know of the work of Christ, and with the suggestions of some of His own parables. Let us fix our minds upon the figure suggested; and in doing so, two points seem to strike the mind, the *sitting* and the *right hand*.

Concerning the latter, it seems sufficient to note that the place at the right hand of the throne is recognised as the chief place of honour. The symbolism belongs as much to our own time and country as to ages gone by and to countries distant from our own. The place of the heir apparent to the throne of England is the Queen's right hand, and in the Psalms we have the phrase, *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*.<sup>1</sup> So again, *Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours*.<sup>2</sup>

Nothing, in short, can be more obvious than that the language

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cx. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xlv. 9.



of the Creed is intended to assert that the highest place in heaven is occupied by Christ as the Son of God.

The posture of *sitting* assigned to Christ is full of meaning and worthy of careful study. It is thrown out into strong relief by the fact, that in the vision of St. Stephen He is represented as *standing*. The idea seems to be that which is expressed in the Collect for St. Stephen's Day, in which we speak of praying to Jesus, 'who stands at the right hand of God, to succour all those that suffer for Him.' Stephen is testifying for the name of Christ even unto death; the heavens are opened to his dying eyes, and in those open heavens he sees the throne of God, and Him, for whom he is bearing such brave witness, still in human form. Jesus is still *the Son of Man*, and He *stands up* to take His suffering servant's part, and to welcome him to his heavenly rest when his work on earth is done. The vision was most significant, and Stephen would instinctively understand it. The attitude of Christ, when the first martyr was permitted to see Him in vision, does not contradict, but rather intensifies, the doctrine of the eternal session.

And what does that eternal session mean? It is impossible to separate the figure from the thought of rest. The work of redemption is done, and the Redeemer rests from His labours. If we may venture to cast a glance upon all the sufferings of Him who was *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*, then we may say with reverence that the sorrows and the grief are come to an end, and in accordance with words already quoted, God has divided to His well-beloved Son a *portion with the great*, and given Him to *divide the spoil with the strong*, because He *poured out His soul unto death*.<sup>1</sup> We have, in fact, the highest authority for taking this view in the words spoken in vision to St. John by the Lord Himself: *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne*.<sup>2</sup>

But the session implies also a continued office and work on behalf of humanity. The presence of Christ on the throne of the Father implies all that is contained in the phrase, *We have*

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah liii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. iii. 21,



*an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*;<sup>1</sup> all that is involved in that perpetual and eternal priesthood, concerning which so much is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews; as, for example, in such a passage as the following: *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*<sup>2</sup> Language such as that which is here quoted, and which might be quoted much more abundantly, implies that the session of Christ is not merely that of one who takes rest after a severe struggle, nor even that of one who has been crowned a conqueror and placed in a throne which henceforth he has only to occupy with dignity and to adorn with his presence; it implies that work on behalf of mankind, to which reference is made when we speak of Christ in our prayers as 'our only Mediator and Advocate.'

And this doctrine connects itself with another, which may be described as that of Christ's eternal manhood. This doctrine is enunciated in a very emphatic form by one of the Articles of the Church of England, wherein it is asserted that by the Incarnation, 'two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and the Manhood, were joined together in one Person, *never to be divided*.'<sup>3</sup> It cannot, of course, be claimed that the session of Christ at the right hand of God necessarily involves as much as is in this Article asserted; but certainly, if we accept the doctrine of the Article we seem to understand and appreciate the doctrine of the Creed.

It is scarcely necessary to admonish a thoughtful reader—to admonish any one, in fact, who is likely to study the subject which we have in hand—of the necessarily anthropomorphic character of the language which describes the doctrine now under consideration.<sup>4</sup> It is very easy to object to the intro-

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. iv. 14-16.

<sup>3</sup> Article II. *Of the Word or Son of God, which was made very man.*

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine cautions the Christians of his age against anthropomorphic

duction of the notion of sitting on a throne in heaven, of the right hand of God, of human nature existing in the unseen spiritual world; but the question is, whether these earthly figures do not convey the best possible conception of that mysterious reality, which in its essential fulness is inconceivable and indescribable. All things which transcend the conditions of time and space can only be apprehended by figures and material images; and the eternal session of the Son of Man belongs distinctly to this transcendental class of things. To object to anthropomorphism as a mode of description bad in itself, as something akin to falsehood or folly, is not wise; and such objection comes with a bad grace, and with something like self-condemnation, from those who in familiar language would speak of a man who does a foolish thing as having *lost his head*, or of a man whose affections are engaged as having *lost his heart*. It is of the very nature of figures, that they can be made false or ridiculous by being pressed to all their literal consequences; and therefore every figure should be limited to the application which is intended by him who uses it: so limited the Christian believer finds no difficulty whatever in the representation, which the Creed gives him, of the present condition and posture of his Lord. The representation fits in with all that he knows or has been taught concerning Christ, it satisfies his longings, it supports him with the sense of an ever-present Mediator and Advocate in the courts of heaven, it realises to him the promise made by the Lord in the days of His flesh: *I go to prepare a place for you*.<sup>1</sup>

Of course it is impossible to deny, and the present writer has no desire to deny, that figurative language may be pressed beyond due bounds. By using language which is necessarily taken from material things we may insensibly fall into unconscious materialism; but this possibility should not deter us from availing ourselves of a mode of speech, which, if not

notions. 'Credimus quod sedet ad dexteram Patris. Nec ideo tamen quasi humanâ formâ circumscriptum esse Deum Patrem arbitrandum est, ut de illo cogitantibus dextrum aut sinistrum latus animo occurrat, &c.'—*De Fide et Symbolo*, vol. vi. p. 270.

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 2.

the only, is certainly the best, vehicle of thought concerning spiritual things. True materialism we should resist to the uttermost, all the more because some of the tendencies of thought in our own times are in that direction. The study of matter is a predominating and growing study. The discoveries in the kingdom of matter in recent times are widespread and wonderful. There is a temptation to overstep the lines of justifiable induction, and to lose the spiritual in the material. The temptation must be resisted; that which is spiritual is spiritual. Nevertheless, we need not be ashamed to confess, that so long as we are in the body and bound by rules of matter, by time and space, by the conditions of the senses, we can only figure to ourselves spiritual things through the medium of the material and visible. Therefore it is no childish weakness to speak of Jesus Christ as sitting at the right hand of God. We think of Him as ever watching over His Church, as representing it in the presence of the Father, as being really and essentially, though we know not how, the same Son of God who once appeared upon earth and took human nature upon Him. We do not know how to express all this more clearly, in language more suitable for man and child, for philosopher and peasant, than by saying that He ever sits at the right hand of God. We are not mad in so doing, but speak the words of truth and soberness.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ARTICLE VII

---

*I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge  
the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom*

2 TIM. iv. 1

AN ENGLISH CREED.

CIRC. 1030.

1. *Ic gelyfe on God Fæder ælmihtigne,  
Scyppend heofenan and eorþan.*
2. *And Ic gelyfe on Hæland Crist, his ancennedan Sunu,  
Urne Drihten ;*
3. *Se wæs geeacnod of þam Halgan Gaste,  
And acenned of Marian þam mædene ;*
4. *Gethrowod under þam Pontiscan Pilate,  
On rode ahangen ;  
He wæs dead, and bebyrged ;*
5. *And he nyther astah to helle ;  
And he aras of death on þam thriddan dæge ;*
6. *And he astah up to heofonum ;  
And sitt nu æt swithran Godes ælmihtiges Fæder ;*
7. *Thanon he wyle cuman to demenne ægther ge þam  
cucum ge þam deadum.*
8. *And Ic gelyfe on thone Halgan Gast ;*
9. *And tha halgan gelathunge ;  
And halgena gemænnysse ;*
10. *And synna forgifenyssse ;*
11. *And flæscs ærist ;*
12. *And thæt ece lyf. Sy hit swa.*

*Harmonia Symbolica, p. 90.*



## CHAPTER VIII.

## ARTICLE VII.

FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK  
AND THE DEAD. (F.)

UPON what foundation does the belief of the Christian Church in the solemn doctrine of the coming of Jesus Christ to judgment rest? There may be grounds for saying that the doctrine, if true, ought to have some foundation in reason; and in a certain sense this is so, as we shall presently see. Doubtless the human mind is very prone to anticipate a future adjustment of the inequalities and anomalies of the present world, and so to evolve out of its own resources a belief in a judgment to come. But the doctrine of the Creed is not a general proposition concerning such a judgment; it is rather a particular and definite dogma concerning Jesus Christ as Judge. It is the concluding article of belief in 'Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord,' and it is with especial reference to the character and office of Christ that the article is made a part of the Creed.<sup>1</sup> Hence it has been thought right in this book to mark this article of our Christian faith with a simple F. : it is upon this foundation that we must depend, and we shall see hereafter that there are circumstances connected with this article, which render it more instructive than almost any one of those that have gone before, with reference to the assurance which believers may feel as to the certainty of those things wherein they have been instructed.

<sup>1</sup> It may be noted that the additional clause of the Nicene Creed, 'whose kingdom shall have no end,' gives dignity to this article, but introduces no new dogma.

Nevertheless, it will be well before we pass to the essentially Christian view of the subject, to consider what the reason and mind of man can do and have done to anticipate, and make preparation for, the more definite teaching of Christ. There were in olden times amongst philosophers and thinkers, and even in the multitude of quite ordinary men, many John Baptists, who went *before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways*:<sup>1</sup> and also in later days there is much within the heart of man, and much that he learns from experience, tending to make the doctrine of a judgment to come worthy of respectful consideration, apart from any direct teaching which may have been given on the subject by the Lord Himself or by His Apostles.

It would not be easy to express the conclusions of the human mind concerning a future judgment in more weighty words than those of Bishop Pearson :

That there is a judgment to come, after this life, will appear demonstrable, whether we consider ourselves who are to undergo it, or God who is to execute it. If we do but reflect upon the frame and temper of our own spirits, we cannot but collect and conclude from thence that we are to give an account of our actions, and that a judgment hereafter is to pass upon us. There is in the soul of every man a conscience, and wheresoever it is, it giveth testimony to this truth. The antecedent or directive conscience tells us what we are to do, and the subsequent or reflexive conscience warns us what we are to receive. Looking back upon the actions we have done, it either approves or condemns them : and if it did no more, it would only prove that there is a judgment in this life, and every man his own judge. But being it doth not only allow and approve our good actions, but also doth create a complacency, and apology, and confidence in us ; being it doth not only disprove and condemn our evil actions, but doth also constantly accuse us, and breed a fearful expectation of terror in us ; and all this prescinding from all relation to anything either to be enjoyed or suffered in this life : it followeth that this conscience is not so much a judge as a witness, bound over to give testimony, for or against us, at some judgment after this life to pass upon us. For all men are *a law unto themselves*, and have

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke i. 76.

*the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men.*<sup>1</sup>

Again, if we consider the God who made us, and hath full dominion over us, whether we look upon Him in Himself, or in His word, we cannot but expect a judgment from Him. First, if we contemplate God in Himself, we must acknowledge Him to be the judge of all mankind, *so that a man shall say, Verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth.*<sup>2</sup> Now the same God who is our Judge is, by an attribute necessary and inseparable, just; and this justice is so essential to His Godhead, that we may as well deny Him to be God as to be just. It was a rational expostulation which Abraham made, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*<sup>3</sup> We may therefore infallibly conclude that God is a most just Judge; and if He be so, we may as infallibly conclude that after this life He will judge the world in righteousness. For as the affairs of this present world are ordered, though they lie under the disposition of Providence, they show no sign of an universal justice. The wicked and disobedient persons are often so happy, as if they were rewarded for their impieties; the innocent and religious often so miserable, as if they were punished for their innocence. Nothing more certain than that in this life rewards are not correspondent to the virtues, punishments not proportionable to the sins of men. Which consideration will enforce one of these conclusions: either that there is no judge of the actions of mankind; or, if there be a judge, he is not just, he renders no proportionable rewards and punishments; or, lastly, if there be a judge, and that judge be just, then is there a judgment in another world, and the effects thereof concern another life. Being then that we must acknowledge that there is a judge, which judgeth the earth; being we cannot deny but God is that Judge, and all must confess that God is most just; being the rewards and punishments of this life are no way answerable to so exact a justice as that which is divine must be; it followeth that there is a judgment yet to come, in which God will show a perfect demonstration of His justice, and to which every man shall in his bosom carry an undeniable witness of all his actions.<sup>4</sup>

The argument contained and expounded so forcibly in the preceding extract is one which has very generally commended itself to the mind of mankind. Nevertheless, it must not be

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 14-16.<sup>2</sup> Ps. lviii. 11.<sup>3</sup> Gen. xviii. 25.<sup>4</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. i. p. 494.

concealed or denied, that almost every principle assumed by Bishop Pearson has, at some time and by some persons, been controverted. The existence of a conscience as a distinct part of man's constitution, and even the existence of God as a moral Governor, together with all the consequences which follow from the assumption of the truth of a moral government, have (as the reader need not be reminded) been disputed and contradicted. Nay, we have been told of late by some, that the progress of physical science and the law of evolution have had the strange result of making belief in a moral Governor of the universe simply untenable. It will not be attempted in this place to deal with the controversy upon such points; it will be sufficient for our present purpose to assert that the points mentioned, and others of a similar kind, cannot be regarded as decided in the negative. It may be true, and for argument's sake it shall be conceded, that it is impossible to demonstrate beyond cavil that conscience is a necessary part of the constitution of man, or that there is a God who governs the earth according to principles of supreme right and justice; but when all that can be said has been said against these alleged truths, it must be granted by any honest disputant that there is something, perhaps even much, to be said on the affirmative side. There is enough ground for a man to stand upon, without being regarded as irrational or foolish: it is quite arguable that the unreason and folly are on the other side. With this argument, however, we are not now concerned. The point which it is desired to press, and which, perhaps, constitutes the most important part of Bishop Pearson's argument, is this: that, admitting the existence of a conscience and of a moral Governor of mankind, it is difficult to evade the conclusion that there is a judgment to come.

A certain class of writers are so intensely, perhaps it may be said so morbidly, afraid of the anthropomorphism, to which reference has been made in the preceding chapter, that it may be well to remark that the phrase *judgment to come* may be used without any reference to the circumstances of a human tribunal, such as naturally rise to the mind when the phrase is used. The conception of such human circumstances as the



judgment seat, the judge sitting thereon, the opening of the books, the passing of the final sentence, is useful as helping us to realise that which in its essence must of necessity be past comprehension. But let all such circumstances be put aside, and let us endeavour to regard the judgment in itself and by itself: let the phrase *judgment to come* be taken as representing that which our Lord on one occasion called the *regeneration*<sup>1</sup>—the rectification of all that is amiss, the bringing in of a perfect rule of righteousness, the complete establishment of the kingdom and the power and the glory of a perfectly righteous God and King. And regarding the judgment to come thus, it is urged that the anticipation of the looking forward to, or the belief in, such a future judgment and regeneration is in accordance with the reason, if not almost demanded by the instincts, of man. From the basis of conscience, the existence of which (controversy notwithstanding) may be regarded as a truth of human experience, we rise to the thought of a good and righteous moral Governor; and from this thought the step is almost one of necessity to the conception of a future condition of things morally different from that which we witness now. There is so much in the present world to shock our minds, when considering what ought to be, when trying to regard this earth as the kingdom of God who made it, that we are driven to postulate a future, in which the condition of things shall be different—infininitely different—from that which now exists.

In support of this position it is obvious to adduce a very general assent of mankind. The opinion so expressed may be, and probably is, confused, inconsistent, incoherent, full of contradictions, and not free from superstitions and fancies. Nevertheless, it can scarcely be put on one side. If the mind of man has pronounced anything which can be properly described as a sentence upon the question of a future judgment, it is in favour of the same, not against it; and certainly as much as this may be affirmed—and the affirmation is very much to our purpose—namely, that when the Apostles' Creed

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xix. 28.



speaks of a judgment to come, it finds itself in harmony with, not in opposition to, the anticipations and general conclusions of human reason.

In harmony also with, not in opposition to, all that we learn from the course of nature and the apparent order of God's providence in the world. This is confidently asserted, notwithstanding the recent denials of the existence of God as a moral Governor, to which reference has already been made: confidently asserted, because the government of God rests upon grounds much deeper, broader, more real, more sound, than those upon which the denial of the same is conceived to rest. The point has been argued by Bishop Butler in the chapter of the 'Analogy' entitled 'Of the government of God by rewards and punishments.' A few words from this chapter may be fitly quoted here. A reference to Butler never needs apology.

The true notion or conception of the Author of nature is that of a master, a governor, prior to the consideration of His moral attributes. The fact of our case, which we find by experience, is, that He actually exercises dominion or government over us at present, by rewarding and punishing us for our actions in as strict and proper a sense of these words, and even in the same sense, as children, servants, subjects are rewarded by those who govern them. Thus the whole analogy of nature, the whole present course of things, most fully shows, that there is nothing incredible in the general doctrine of religion, that God will reward and punish men for their actions hereafter: nothing incredible, I mean, arising out of the notion of rewarding and punishing. For the whole course of nature is a present instance of His exercising that government over us, which implies in it rewarding and punishing.<sup>1</sup>

All that Butler has written on this subject—and what has been quoted is a mere sample—is most convincing, if it be once conceded that there is such a thing as moral government. This great cardinal point has, as already mentioned, been denied; but the denial appears to involve the conclusion of absolute materialism—a conclusion which presents itself to many minds as being in the fullest degree untenable, because in the highest degree irrational.

<sup>1</sup> *Analogy*, Part I. chap. ii.

It may be that the powers of matter and its status in the universe have been underrated by some schools of philosophers, but it is equally certain that the tendency in some schools has been to exaggerate them. It has been claimed, for example, that the powers of matter are so unbounded that we may legitimately 'cross the boundary of experimental evidence, and discern in matter the promise and potency of all terrestrial life.'<sup>1</sup> This remarkable statement is here quoted for the purpose of observing, that even if the bold stride of mental assumption suggested should be accepted as legitimate, the result would still fall far short of that absolute materialism which denies a moral Governor of the universe. It is perhaps just conceivable that as matter has been endowed with many remarkable qualities and powers, so it should have been endowed with the power of being the origin of terrestrial life. Experience is all against the supposition; but there would seem to be nothing in it which would require the mind absolutely and definitively to reject it upon *a priori* grounds. It is quite different with regard to the moral region of thought. Matter and morals are incommensurable things; the conception of a moral Governor is in no sense or degree material. The idea of right, the sentiment of love, the exercise of independent will, do not in any way connect themselves with the thought of matter. So that even if it be granted that matter contains the potency of terrestrial life, it still remains to be asked, What *is* terrestrial life? How much does it include? A cabbage and a crystal may conceivably—so, at least, it shall be assumed—be due to the same law of formation: but can it be accepted that the sense of honour, respect for truth, the spirit of self-sacrifice, all that is noble in man, are equally producible by matter, without any higher inspiration? On the whole, may it not be questioned whether pure materialism is not more difficult of belief than any article in the Apostles' Creed, and whether the moral conception of creation is not to be regarded as a postulate of human intelligence?

What has been already advanced may suffice as an exposition of what the mind of man can do, or has done, in anticipating or

<sup>1</sup> Tyndall's *Belfast Address to the British Association*.

evolving for itself the doctrine of a judgment to come : the more so, because (as already remarked) the truth set forth in the seventh article of the Creed is not a general doctrine of retribution depending on reason, but a particular and definite doctrine of a judgment committed to Him whom we believe to have become man, and to be now sitting at the right hand of God. This particular and definite doctrine must manifestly depend upon faith, not upon reason. If the coming of the Son of God in great humility can be acknowledged only by the power of faith, notwithstanding all the historical circumstances connected with it, much more must it be the power of faith to which we must look for the adequate reception of a doctrine, so transcendental in its character as that of the coming again of that same Son of God to judge the quick and dead.

That the doctrine is bound up with the whole New Testament teaching is manifest to all who read ; but it will be desirable to illustrate the fact ; and I shall begin by reference to a passage, which is perhaps the most remarkable of all those bearing upon the subject, because it contains a distinct announcement from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The reader is referred to the discourse delivered in Jerusalem and recorded by St. John in the fifth chapter of his Gospel. It will be worth while to quote at some length from this discourse, because the whole tenor of it indicates the nature of that relation between the Father and the Son, upon which depends the possibility of speaking of a man being appointed judge of the world without blasphemy, or indeed without absurdity.

Let us begin with the words *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*<sup>1</sup> This statement gave offence, as it was likely to do, implying that the speaker was equal with God ; no such blasphemous suggestion could be tolerated by orthodox Jews. But the Lord does not qualify His language ; rather He intensifies it by adding, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do : for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*<sup>2</sup> Thus the divine power of the Son is maintained and enforced. It is not,

<sup>1</sup> St. John v. 17.

<sup>2</sup> St. John v. 19.

as all divines will admit, a power exercised by the Son as the original fountain of deity : that original fountain is in the Father, not in the Son : the Son is begotten of the Father, ' God of God, Light of Light,' as the Nicene Creed expresses it : but still the power of working, even as the Father works, belongs of right to the Son, as being very God. And now we come to language which brings the foregoing general theological statements to bear upon the seventh article of the Creed : *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.*<sup>1</sup> Concerning these words it may be said, that they will occasion no difficulty to anyone who has grasped the fundamental doctrine of the Christian dispensation, namely, the Mediatorial office of Christ, which is in fact involved in the great truth of the Incarnation. God sees mankind, so to speak, through Christ. *He hath made us accepted in the beloved.*<sup>2</sup> *He hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.*<sup>3</sup> He regards manhood, not as it is in itself and as it is ordinarily exhibited in the world, but as it has been redeemed and illuminated and consecrated by the manhood of Christ. Jesus Christ is ever that which in His baptism He was declared to be, namely, *the beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased* ;<sup>4</sup> and consequently, when the question arises of judgment, the only conclusion which would seem probable is that this great work will be delivered over to the *beloved Son*. That this conclusion is correct is made still more clear by the very definite and solemn words which soon follow in the Lord's discourse : *Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God : and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself ; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself ; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this ; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*<sup>5</sup>

This statement, made by Jesus Christ Himself, virtually

<sup>1</sup> St. John v. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. i. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Col. i 13.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. iii. 17.

<sup>5</sup> St. John v. 25-29.



affirms all that is asserted concerning a judgment in the Apostles' Creed. It is well to bear in mind that so definite a declaration was made in human words by the lips of Him whom Christians recognise as divine: the fact will tend to explain some of the confidence felt and expressed by believers in the truth of the doctrine which they have received. On this point something more will be said hereafter: for the present let us go on to observe, not only that Jesus Christ is reported in St. John's Gospel to have claimed for Himself the high office of final and supreme Judge, but that the claim occupied so prominent a place in the minds of His disciples, that, even if there were no such record in St. John's Gospel or in any other, we should be almost compelled to believe that the doctrine of the Creed rested upon Christ's own authority; no other hypothesis would seem adequate to explain the phenomena. It may perhaps be said that there was scarcely any truth, which occupied a higher and more constant place in the minds of the Apostles. Thus St. Peter in explaining the Gospel to Cornelius, the Roman centurion, says, *He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.*<sup>1</sup> Again, in addressing the court of Areopagus, St. Paul uses these words, *God hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.*<sup>2</sup> Again, we have incidental references in Apostolic writings such as the following: *in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.*<sup>3</sup> The man who wrote these words clearly regarded the doctrine of Jesus Christ judging the world as a commonplace of divinity.<sup>4</sup> And indeed, any one who will take the pains to observe how completely the spiritual conceptions of the disciples began and ended with Jesus Christ, will probably come to the conclusion that their minds were well prepared for such a doctrine. Some persons may even be disposed to argue against the reality of

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 42.<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 31.<sup>3</sup> Rom. ii. 16.<sup>4</sup> It may be noted that although Jesus Christ is not spoken of as Judge, the Epistle to the Hebrews mentions the *resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment* as amongst the *principles of the doctrine of Christ*. (Heb. vi. 1, 2.)



the doctrine, on the very ground that it is just what the disciples would have been likely to evolve for themselves; but it seems much more probable on general principles, and much more consistent with all that has come down to us, that the disciples received the doctrine from Jesus Christ Himself, and that, falling upon the good ground of believing hearts, it sprang up and bore fruit an hundredfold. Certainly it may be taken for granted, that to every Christian mind, whether in primitive or in recent times, all thoughts concerning the future of mankind must in some form and in some degree connect themselves with Jesus Christ—especially when Jesus Christ is regarded as having ascended into heaven, and as having sat down on the right hand of God the Father.

We may go a step further, and say that the firmness of the hold which this article of faith established upon the minds of the early disciples—in fact upon the whole primitive Church—is illustrated even by the errors and extravagances of expectation into which the belief led not a few. There can be little doubt but that many early Christians—possibly some of the Apostles themselves—expected their Master not only to return, but to return quickly according to human measures of quickness. This may be illustrated by what we read in the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. In the first of these Epistles the Apostle had written in this fashion: *If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord.*<sup>1</sup> This language, as was not unlikely, seems to have raised in the minds of the Thessalonian Christians expectations of a very speedy appearance of the Lord: and consequently, in his second letter

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thes. iv. 14-17.

to the same Church the Apostle wrote thus: *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.*<sup>1</sup> Thus the expectation of an immediate advent is checked, while the advent itself is reasserted and emphasised: but probably even the explanation given by St. Paul, with the intention of sobering and calming the minds of the Thessalonians, would not convey to those minds that which the experience of nineteen centuries has proved to be the truth. There is no reason, so far as I know, for asserting that St. Paul himself was in possession of full knowledge; and in the absence of knowledge no advice could be better than that which was given by St. Peter. *Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.*<sup>2</sup> This language contains what may be described as the true philosophy of the future: on reading all that St. Peter wrote in connection with the passage just quoted, it is difficult to believe—there is, in fact, no reason why we should believe—that even to him any clear view of the coming of Christ was granted: but whatever the future may be—and we seem in the nineteenth century to have no truer power of forecast and anticipation than Christians had in the first—the thought that centuries to us are not centuries to God, and that in reckoning what is quick and what is slow this mighty difference between God and man must be taken into account may very well serve to steady our minds and to lead us to feel that the practical and godly employment of the present, not speculation concerning the future, constitutes the true duty of us all.

Has the reader ever considered that in reality the difference between quick and slow, between a long time and a short time, exists only for man and does not exist for God? When it is stated that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, the phrase is not a poetical hyperbole,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thes. ii. 1 2.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 8, 10.

but represents a plain simple fact. To God—the infinite, the absolute, the I Am—time, as duration, does not exist. Neither does space: take the case of space, instead of that of time, as being more easy of conception. Consider the solar system. We speak of it as occupying a large space, more than one hundred and eighty millions of miles being necessary to make room for the movement of the earth, and a much larger space for the superior planets. But if each mile were reduced to a foot, and we ourselves were reduced to proportionately pigmy forms, it is manifest that the perception of men as regards large and small would be precisely the same in this reduced solar system as it is in the existing universe. So that it is entirely conceivable that a solar system should exist, capable of being put into a pill-box, which should nevertheless present to the inhabitants of one of its planets, endued with reason, precisely the same thoughts of grandeur and magnificence, which are presented to our own minds, when we contemplate the great central globe which we call the sun and all its attendant planets. But the supposed reduction of the dimensions of the solar system would manifestly not touch the being of God; and consequently it may be asserted as a proposition of demonstrable truth, that one million of miles is with the Lord as a hair's-breadth, and one hair's-breadth as a million of miles. It is no figure of speech, it is a prosaic reality to which every mind must assent, when it understands its meaning. And what is true of space is equally true, though perhaps not so easily seen to be true, of time.<sup>1</sup> There is no time which is absolutely short, and no time which is absolutely long. The infinite Being whom we call God is simply independent of length of time, as He is independent of the great and small in space; and we may

<sup>1</sup> The reasoning given in the text may be applied to the conception of time as follows. Time may be converted, as it were, into space by the consideration that it may be measured by the beats of a pendulum. The reader is probably aware that a second of time corresponds to the oscillation of a pendulum of a certain length, hence called a seconds pendulum. Suppose then that every dimension of space should be contracted in the manner already supposed; the standard seconds pendulum would be contracted in the same proportion, and the measure of time would experience a corresponding diminution; hence, as measured by human device, it might be quite true that a thousand years should be contracted to the apparent length of one day.

conclude therefore that it is no poetical hyperbole, but a simple statement of fact, to say that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Considerations of this kind may present difficulties of conception; but they ought to be borne in mind and carefully weighed by those who speculate for themselves, or who discuss the hints given in Holy Scripture, concerning those things which shall be hereafter.

I now proceed to consider a different aspect of the subject.

The article under consideration is the first to which faith has been ascribed as the sole foundation. History clearly has no place whatever, and to human reason only such partial reference is possible as that which has been already made in this chapter. The article, regarded in its full and definite meaning, can rest and does rest upon faith only. Hence it may be convenient to take this opportunity of examining more particularly this kind of foundation, and of endeavouring to show that an article of the Creed resting upon it may be *worthy of all acceptance*.<sup>1</sup>

Let us start from the declaration which has been already quoted as having been made by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The words, be it observed, are quite clear and express. The Father has given the Son authority to execute judgment. Those who are in the graves will hear the voice of the Son of Man, and will come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. There can be no mistake concerning these declarations; they may be, and manifestly must be, figurative shadows of the mysterious future, rather than realistic pictures; human words cannot completely express things spiritual. Still, the general meaning is plain, and that meaning agrees with the seventh article of the Apostles' Creed. Hence, if the words of our Lord in St. John's Gospel be truly reported, they effectually bind together the credibility of the Creed with the credibility of the Lord Jesus Christ. The two credibilities stand or fall together. The conclusion seems irresistible. The Creed says

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. i. 15.



what Jesus Christ said; if one can be believed, the other must be believed also.

But are we quite sure that the Lord did speak the words attributed to Him by the fourth Gospel? Critics have thrown suspicion upon the discourses which that Gospel contains, and have maintained that they do not harmonise with the utterances of Christ as recorded by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. It would be impossible to go into the whole subject to which this remark might introduce us. But with regard to the practical certainty that the Lord actually spoke in the sense of the words attributed to Him in the fourth Gospel, it may be argued as follows.

In the first place, the words are in complete accordance with those which are assigned to Jesus Christ when speaking upon other occasions. Take, for example, the remarkable description of the judgment given in St. Matthew's Gospel. *When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*<sup>1</sup> Then follows the account of the judgment; the questions put; the answers or explanations given. Lastly comes the announcement of the sentence. *These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*<sup>2</sup> Now it is not necessary, nor shall I attempt, to expound the whole of this passage, or to clear it of all difficulty: nay, it is not even necessary to prove that the judgment described is identical with that to which the Lord referred, when He spoke of the dead rising from the graves at the sound of His voice. It will be observed that the judgment described in St. Matthew's Gospel is one of *nations*, and the distinction between the sheep and the goats depends upon one point, namely, the reception accorded, and kindness or unkindness shewn, to the Lord Himself, or to the least of His brethren as representing Him. All this, and perhaps other circumstances, should be

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxv. 31-33.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxv. 46.



taken into account, in considering how far it can be maintained that the judgment of St. Matthew, chapter xxv., is identical with that of St. John, chapter v. But the point insisted upon is this: that the language attributed to the Lord in the one Gospel is of the same character and tone as that attributed to Him in the other. If Jesus Christ really spoke as is represented by St. Matthew, there is nothing incredible in the report of St. John.

Equally significant are some of the incidental references made by the Lord to His own position and His own power. As for example, when He says, *All things are delivered to Me of My Father*:<sup>1</sup> if all things, then why not the future of mankind? Or again, after the resurrection, *All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth*:<sup>2</sup> must not this gift of power include the office of judge? The fact is, that a disciple of Christ, who reads the Gospels habitually, and so enters into their spirit, and grasps the idea of God condescending to become man, which runs through them and makes them what they are, can scarcely fail to regard the Lord's alleged utterance concerning the final judgment as one calculated to excite no astonishment and no doubt, in consideration of the character of Him who made it.

But there is a broader and perhaps still more conclusive, view of the case, which ought to be suggested. It cannot be doubted that the belief that Jesus Christ would come again to judge the quick and the dead was abundant and vital in the very earliest days of the Church. It is no exaggeration to say that the writings of the Apostles are saturated with this belief. It is not a solitary passage here and there which may be interpreted to mean it; the whole structure of the books involves it. Several passages which might suitably be produced in proof of this have already been quoted in another part of this chapter, and shall not be repeated; but in addition to these several others may advantageously be cited. Thus St. Paul writes, *We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ*:<sup>3</sup> words which are all the more emphatic when it is observed how they are suggested. *Why*

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke x. 22.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xiv. 10.

*dost thou judge thy brother?* asks St. Paul; and the argument against judging a brother is that we shall all be judged by Christ. Must not the doctrine of Christ's judgment seat have been very familiar, when it introduced itself into so homely an argument? St. Paul repeats himself, with a striking addition, in writing to the Corinthians. *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*<sup>1</sup>—a striking addition, because the words make the language of St. Paul an exact paraphrase of that attributed to the Lord by St. John. In like manner, writing to Timothy, St. Paul says, *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead at His appearing and His kingdom.*<sup>2</sup>

In the above passages the judgment and the judgment seat are distinctly recognised. The same thought is sometimes involved when the coming or appearance of Christ is anticipated, though with no such direct reference to the judgment of men according to their works as a consequence of the advent. Thus St. Peter promises that *when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*<sup>3</sup> Again St. Paul writes: *There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.*<sup>4</sup> Once more, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of *running the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*<sup>5</sup>

I have dealt with the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles: it still remains that reference should be made to the most obscure of all the books of the New Testament, the Revelation of St. John the Divine. For our present purpose it is not obscure, and its testimony is most important. Whatever may be the difficulty of interpreting parts of the book, it is clear that it represents as a great Christian truth the sitting down of

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 10.<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 1.<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. v. 4.<sup>4</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 8.<sup>5</sup> Heb. xii. 1, 2.

the Eternal Son upon the throne of the Father. Who can doubt this when he reads such words as the following? *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.*<sup>1</sup> Here we have language, spoken by the Lord in vision, closely corresponding to that recorded by St. John to have been spoken by the same Lord in the flesh. And doubtless the judgment, which is subsequently described in very solemn language as the judgment of God, may be claimed, according to the whole spirit and tenor of the book, for the Eternal Son. *I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*<sup>2</sup> This conclusion will appear still more clearly, when the earlier words spoken in vision by the Lord Himself are borne in mind. *I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*<sup>3</sup> Those other words should also be remembered: *Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.*<sup>4</sup> The fact is, that although the doctrine of the seventh article of the Creed is nowhere enunciated directly in the Book of Revelation (as indeed it could scarcely be expected to be), the whole of the vision fits in with it, and seems to assume its truth.

Let the reader bear in mind the ground upon which the preceding references have been made to the writings of the New Testament. It has been for an indirect rather than a direct reason: not so much for the sake of gathering from Holy Scripture what the doctrine of the Church concerning a future judgment is or ought to be, as for the sake of making it probable, almost to the limit of absolute certainty, that the doctrine which we have in the Creed, and which (as we have seen) manifests itself everywhere in the New Testament, was really derived from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself, as the fourth Gospel bears witness that it was. Of course, if the

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 21.<sup>2</sup> Rev. xx. 12.<sup>3</sup> Rev. i. 18.<sup>4</sup> Rev. i. 7.

trustworthiness of what we read in the Gospels, as we now possess them, be granted, there is no longer any place for argument; the Lord Jesus *did* declare that He would come again to judge the world. But even if this trustworthiness be doubted or denied—and a believer may grant for argument's sake all that is asked by those who thus doubt or deny—still the phenomena of the case, as evidenced by the consistent and universal assertion of the New Testament writers and the primitive Christians, are such as to make it as nearly certain as possible that the doctrine came from Jesus Christ Himself. This conclusion, to which it seems difficult to raise any objection, is reasonable in itself, and solves every difficulty.

Here, then, is an admirable, perhaps unrivalled, opportunity of exhibiting and examining faith as a sufficient foundation for an article of Christian belief. It is not asserted that in all cases, in which faith is claimed as a foundation, the stability of the superstructure can be argued in the same manner as in this present instance. With regard to the article now under discussion, a Christian is able to say simply and distinctly, I believe that Jesus Christ will come to judge the quick and the dead, because Jesus Christ has told me so Himself. The measure of our confidence in the truth of this doctrine is the confidence which we have in the truthfulness of our Lord. Let the reader carefully note this. If we accept the truth of the Incarnation, almost everything else that a man ought to know and believe follows without difficulty; but in the present argument the great postulate of the Incarnation may be laid aside for the moment. We may agree to look for the time, not upon the only begotten Son of God, but upon Jesus of Nazareth; and we ask, what did Jesus of Nazareth ever say or do, which would justify us in the supposition that what He told us is not true? It is the truthfulness, the honesty, the sanity, not the divinity of the Lord which is here chiefly at stake. St. Matthew tells us, that after the crucifixion certain persons went to Pontius Pilate and told him of some words, which He whom they had crucified, and whom they described as *that deceiver*,<sup>1</sup> had spoken in His lifetime. Few unbelievers

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxvii. 63.



in our own days—though there may be some—would like to take up the words *that deceiver*; yet it is difficult to see, in the face of the considerations which have been produced, what middle course there is between this condemnation of Jesus of Nazareth as a deceiver, and the recognition of His claims to be called Jesus Christ. I have said that we may agree to look for the time only upon Jesus of Nazareth, that is, only upon the manhood of the Lord Jesus: but, in reality, as soon as we have done so, and have accepted His words as the utterance of a truthful man, we perceive how inadequate is the supposition of simple manhood to support the declaration which the human lips of Jesus made. He could not have spoken the words which He actually spoke, unless beneath that manhood, or in conjunction with it, there had been something superhuman, something Divine. We may accept the words of Jesus of Nazareth as those of a man who spoke the truth; but we feel that the words could not have been spoken at all, unless that same Jesus had been also the Son of God.

Thus belief in the seventh article of the Creed would seem to be capable of being reduced, in a very remarkable degree, to the question of personal credibility. But there is another point of view from which the article may be considered, and according to which it may be connected in a most instructive manner with the whole history of the Lord. The article is, as will be observed, the concluding chapter in that history, as contained in the Apostles' Creed. If it can be shewn that the whole coheres, and forms, when taken together, one consistent presentation of the Incarnation—if it can be made to appear, that the end follows by a kind of spiritual logic from the beginning—then it may be fairly argued that the credibility of the whole is increased and strengthened.

There is perhaps a tendency to regard the doctrine of the final judgment too much in the light of the opening lines of the mediæval hymn:

*Dies iræ dies illa,  
Solvat sæclum in favilla—*

too much tendency to regard judgment as simply synonymous with vengeance, according to Michael Angelo's wonderful



pictorial representation in the Sistine Chapel. But in reality this is an imperfect view; and the imperfection of it is brought to mind, when we observe the connection in which the judgment of men according to their works is made to stand with the conclusion of things as described in the vision of St. John. The dead, small and great, stood before God: the books were opened: the sea gave up the dead that were in it: every man was judged according to his works. Was that the end? by no means. It was after this judgment, that the Apostle *saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; and there was no more sea.*<sup>1</sup> Then it was that the real kingdom of God began, and that *He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.*<sup>2</sup> Then came the vision of the new Jerusalem, and of that blessed condition of things in which there is no Temple, because *the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple,*<sup>3</sup> and in which there is no more night, because light perpetual flows from the presence of the Lamb. I am not intending to put an exact and particular interpretation upon this glowing description; any attempt to do so would almost certainly fail; but we seem to be upon firm ground, so long as we assert that the judgment is not the end, but only the introduction of the end—if indeed we can properly speak of an end when time is no more. Looking then to the judgment as one event in the future history of the human race, and regarding it as introductory to the condition of things which St. John describes as the new heaven and the new earth, is it not clear that the judgment which the Lord claimed for Himself, and which the Creed assigns to Him, is a part of that great work of regeneration which He undertook when He became man? That work, in its completeness, was the putting away of sin and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness; and it cannot be regarded as complete, until that new heaven and new earth have been created. If this idea be once grasped, the Christian believer will perhaps be led to see, that the first article of the Creed concerning Christ and the last concerning Him hang naturally together, and that when the believing soul

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxi. 1.<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxi. 5.<sup>3</sup> Rev. xxi. 22.

has accepted the thought of the Son of God becoming man for the regeneration of mankind, it is impossible to dismiss the thought until faith has seen the work completed by the passing of judgment, the destruction of all that is evil, and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness. *Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution* [ἀποκατάστασις—restoration, R.V.] *of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*<sup>1</sup> Thus, according to a phrase already used, the whole history of Christ in the Creed seems to hang together by a kind of spiritual logic; and he who recognises the truth, that ‘when Christ took upon Him to deliver man, He did not abhor the Virgin’s womb,’ will be prepared by that recognition to accept the truth of the judgment seat of Christ, and of all the eternal chain of consequences which the judgment seat involves: the beginning and the end are one.

The charge of anthropomorphism, to which reference has been already made, will no doubt present itself with chief intensity in connection with this article of the Creed. It is obvious to reply to objections in this, as in all other cases, that if there be an unseen spiritual universe, and if there be an unseen spiritual future for mankind, the only possible method of representing them to the mind of man must be anthropomorphic. But it may be well, in taking leave of this seventh article of the Creed, which brings the subject forward more strikingly perhaps than any other, to observe, that the whole Christian scheme, as revealed in Holy Scripture, and as summarised in the creeds of the Church, is anthropomorphic in the highest sense of the word; that is to say, it does not merely describe divine things under human forms, as when we read of the eye of God, or the hand of God, or of God being angry or vexed or grieved, or the like, but it represents God as having actually assumed the form of man (μορφῇ ἀνθρώπου), by birth of the Blessed Virgin, so that humanity with all its weaknesses, and with likeness to the whole human race in everything except sin, may be predicated of God. There can

<sup>1</sup> Acts iii. 21.

be no mistake about this. *Being in the form of God* (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων) . . . *He made Himself of no reputation* (emptied Himself, ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν), *and took upon Him the form of a servant* (μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν), *and was made in the likeness of men*<sup>1</sup> (ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος). The *form of God* as the original form of the Lord Jesus Christ, the assumption of the *form of a servant* or slave, which is explained by the being made in the *likeness of men*—that is, by the Incarnation or human birth—these points are made as clear as language can make them: and what is here asserted is, that the language used, which is in harmony with the whole teaching of the New Testament, justifies us in describing the scheme of Christ as in the highest and truest sense anthropomorphic, because it rests upon the one supreme truth, that God became man in Jesus Christ.

Hence it is only a natural conclusion, just what might be expected, that the Creed should contain a representation of the things, which shall be hereafter, under human forms; it takes the believer as far as the judgment seat of Christ, of which Christ Himself has spoken, and there it leaves Him. Nor can he easily get beyond this, on the strength of any speculation which human knowledge may enable him to make. But it may be well to note that Christian faith has nothing whatever to dread from such speculation, and that in fact there is one conclusion to which science seems to point, of a kind calculated to strengthen the expectations which the Christian mind chiefly cherishes. For it seems to be tolerably sure on scientific grounds that the present order of things will have an end; that end may be very distant, and according to human estimates of long or short no doubt it is: but except through some agency outside the present order of nature, which may therefore be correctly described as *præternatural* or *supernatural*, and which will amount to a new creation, the existing solar system (to go no further) must have an end. It may be added that it must have had a beginning, concerning the date of which scientific men feel themselves justified in speculating

<sup>1</sup> Philip. ii. 6, 7.

within certain limits. So that the notion of all things having been as they are from the past eternity, and continuing as they are to the future eternity, is one which the progress of science, at all events its present most probable conclusions, will not support. The end must come, says science. *The end of all things is at hand*,<sup>1</sup> says Holy Scripture. And there is not much difference between the two utterances, if only it be remembered that according to divine chronology *one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*.<sup>2</sup>

If then human reason enables us to look forward with some degree of certainty to a conclusion of the present condition of things, is it difficult to believe in what may be called a moral conclusion of the same? Does not the heart of man encourage his mind to anticipate a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness will dwell? And is it strange that he who believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God should connect belief in that future regeneration, that new creation, that coming of the Kingdom of God in all its anticipated perfection, with belief in the Incarnation, and with that Mediatorial work of which, according to Christian belief, the Incarnation is the divinely appointed means?

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 8.

## CHAPTER IX

### ARTICLE VIII

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST

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*They were all filled with the Holy Ghost—*ACTS ii. 4



ENGLAND.

CIRC. A.D. 1400.

1. *I bileve in God Fadir almygti,  
Makere of heuene and of erthe ;*
2. *And in Jesu Crist, the Sone of him,  
Oure Lord oon aloone ;*
3. *Which is conceyued of the hooli gost,  
Born of Marie maiden ;*
4. *Suffride passioun undir Pounce Pilat, crucified,  
Deed, and biried ;*
5. *He wente down to hellis ;  
The thridde day he roos agen fro deede ;*
6. *He steig to hevenes ;  
He sitteth on the rigt syde of God the Fadir almygti ;*
7. *Thenus he is to come for to deme the quyke and deede ;*
8. *I bileve in the hooli Goost ;*
9. *Feith of hooli chirche ;  
Comunyng of seyntis ;*
10. *Forgyuenesse of synnes ;*
11. *Agenrisyng of fleish ;*
12. *And everlastyng lyf. So be it.*

*Harmonia Symbolica, p. 97.*

## CHAPTER IX.

## ARTICLE VIII.

## I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST. (H., F., R.)

THIS article may be regarded as commencing a new chapter in the Creed. The transition might be expressed theologically by saying, that whereas hitherto we have been engaged with the First and Second Persons in the blessed Trinity, we now enter upon the consideration of the Third. But independently of any strict theological definition, it is obvious that there is a great distinction between those articles of the Creed which have lately been examined, referring as they do directly or indirectly to the life, death, and supernatural history of Him whom we regard as God and man, and an article which deals with an unseen Person and an entirely spiritual subject, such as is introduced by the phrase, *I believe in the Holy Ghost*.<sup>1</sup>

It was perhaps the felt magnitude of the transition from the articles which treat of belief in Jesus Christ, to that which treats of belief in the Holy Ghost, that led to the repetition of the formula—*I believe*. The repetition is not strictly necessary: in some of the older forms of Creed it does not in fact appear; but it tends to mark a real transition, while at the same time it adds to the stately solemnity of our profession of faith, and marks the attitude of mind in which alone it is possible to deal suitably with such a subject as that of belief in the Holy Ghost. The question of the existence and the creative action of God cannot fail to be discussed, partly at least, on purely scientific and philosophical grounds: the life and ministry of Jesus

<sup>1</sup> I presume that reference is made to this distinction by the Catechism of the Council of Trent, which remarks: *nemo mirari debet, tertiæ personæ, quemadmodum primæ et secundæ, proprium nomen tributum non esse. Nam secunda persona ideo proprium nomen habet, et Filius dicitur, quia ejus æternus a Patre ortus propriæ generatio vocatur.*

Christ have in them so distinct an historical element, that they cannot be withdrawn from critical examination; but with regard to the Holy Ghost the ordinary philosopher has not much, and the ordinary historian has nothing to say: it is only for those who have settled their minds with regard to belief in the Father and the Son, that belief in the Holy Ghost can become a matter of interest. To them the interest will be nothing short of supreme; they will find in this last great step in the school of God that which confirms and explains and expounds all the previous articles of their belief.

Nevertheless it will be seen that I have marked this article in the table of the introductory chapter not with a simple F., but with H. and R. as well. The justification of both these marks will, it is hoped, be seen in the sequel.

1. The manner in which belief in the Holy Ghost may be spoken of as having an historical foundation, is different from that in which the assertion is made with respect to belief in Jesus Christ. The life of Jesus Christ is from one point of view distinctly and undeniably matter of history; quite as distinctly and undeniably as the life of Alexander the Great, or Julius Cæsar, or Sir Isaac Newton; no one can deny, without suspicion of insanity, the existence of such an historical personage, and of certain facts alleged concerning Him, notably His crucifixion under Pontius Pilate. Nothing of a similar kind can in the nature of things be asserted concerning the Holy Ghost. The history of a man and the history of a spirit must manifestly be essentially different from each other. What is meant by speaking of an historical basis for belief in the Holy Ghost is this, that the conception of a Divine Person proceeding from God the Father does not begin with any revelation made by Jesus Christ, and is not entirely dependent upon such revelation. The doctrine which our Lord delivered on the subject is of necessity the highest that we can have, and trust in Jesus Christ as an infallible Teacher will be to every Christian the surest ground of belief in the person and office of the Holy Ghost; this will be dwelt upon more fully hereafter; but independently of the teaching of Christ, it is well

to observe that in the Old Testament we have clear indications of the presence of a Power described as the Spirit of God. This Spirit appears continually as a living Divine Agent. When New Testament history commences, the existence and agency of the Spirit are assumed as truths well known. When Jesus Christ our Lord taught His disciples concerning the Holy Spirit, He did not speak as one who was exhibiting something entirely new, but rather as one who was throwing light upon truths hitherto imperfectly known.<sup>1</sup> And after the Lord's departure the agency of the Holy Spirit appears as a distinct and well-recognised portion of the history of the Church. In this way it may be rightly stated, that the article of the Creed, *I believe in the Holy Ghost*, rests partly upon a foundation of history. I proceed to illustrate this position by reference to Holy Scripture.

It is remarkable that some of the earliest words in the book of Genesis are these: *the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*<sup>2</sup> Upon this passage the Bishop of Winchester observes, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' that while many Jewish commentators give the rendering 'a mighty wind was moving,' etc., the common rendering is the more natural; and he adds, 'The Spirit of God appears to be represented as the great quickening principle, hovering or brooding over the earth and the ocean, and breathing forth upon them light and life.' If this be so, we may advantageously compare the passage with one which occurs subsequently, and in which the Spirit of God

<sup>1</sup> 'The Apostolic doctrine of the Holy Ghost had been anticipated to some extent by the writers of the Old Testament. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures mention is made of a Spirit of God, characterised by holiness, goodness, and omnipresence, the source of life in nature, of wisdom and power in man, and of a special inspiration in the prophets. The deuterocanonical books also give prominence to the idea of a Holy Spirit, identified apparently with the Divine Wisdom; it fills the universe, loves mankind, and teaches and purifies men's minds and hearts. Later Jewish thought, however, tended to lower the teaching of the Canon. The Sadduceanism of our Lord's time cut at the root of all belief in spiritual existences. With Philo, the Spirit of God is no more than the wisdom which God imparts to the wise, or the influence which He exerts over the inspired; and this view became at a later period a settled article of the Jewish Creed.'—Dr. Swete in *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, s. v. 'Holy Ghost.'

<sup>2</sup> Gen. i. 2.

is regarded not with reference to physical creation, but with reference to action upon the soul of man. *The Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh.*<sup>1</sup> The precise meaning may be not quite certain; the commentator already quoted tells us, that 'Kimchi, and some of the German commentators, understand, not that the Holy Ghost shall no longer dwell or strive with man, but that the spiritual principle implanted by God in man shall no longer rule in him, or no longer contend against his animal nature.' But whatever be the precise meaning, it is impossible not to recognise some kind of agency upon man's soul, connected with, or flowing from, a divine agency described as 'My Spirit,' that is, the Spirit of God. It would be as great a mistake to neglect such language as this altogether, as it would be to endeavour to elicit from it the whole extent of the Christian doctrine on the subject. It is a bright morning star, not the sun. Whatever be the extent of its meaning in this early page of Holy Scripture, there can be no question as to its being the forerunner of a great current of language to the same effect. A few examples may suffice to illustrate and prove this.

Thus in the first Book of Samuel we find the history of the anointing of David given in the following terms: *The Lord said, Arise anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.* Again, in the next verse we have an opposite statement concerning Saul: *The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul.*<sup>2</sup>

In like manner in the prophetic books we have such passages as the following:

*There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.*<sup>3</sup> *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek.*<sup>4</sup> *The Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak.*<sup>5</sup> *Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah lxi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. xvi. 12-14.

<sup>5</sup> Ezek. xi. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah xi. 1, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Zech. iv. 6.



So in the book of Psalms we read, *Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.*<sup>1</sup> *Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit: or whither shall I go then from Thy presence?*<sup>2</sup>

Lastly may be quoted a remarkable passage from the Apocryphal book of Wisdom, which, in its tone and teaching, is worthy of Christian times. *What man is he that can know the counsel of God? or who can think what the will of the Lord is? For the thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and our devices are but uncertain. For the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthy tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things. And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us: but the things that are in heaven who hath searched out? And Thy counsel who hath known, except Thou give wisdom, and send Thy Holy Spirit from above?*<sup>3</sup> In the Commentary on the Apocryphal books in sequence to the 'Speaker's Commentary,' Archdeacon Farrar remarks upon the reference to the Holy Spirit: 'The verse must not, of course, be interpreted in the full sense of modern doctrine; but the thought is similar to that in 1 Cor. ii. 10-12: *The Spirit searcheth all things, even the depths of God.* St. Paul very possibly had this passage in his mind.'

The result of the preparation, of which the preceding quotations give evidence, was that at the time of the birth of our Lord the idea of a Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost, was quite familiar to the Jewish mind. And so it comes to pass that in the very beginning of the Gospels, prior to all Christian teaching, we find reference made to the operation of the Spirit with as great freedom as in the later writings of the New Testament, or in the ordinary literature of the Christian Church.

For example, in the opening of the Gospel according to St. Matthew we find the phrase, *that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost*; <sup>4</sup> which words, let it be carefully observed, are quoted not with reference to the theological fact which they affirm, but only (in this place) as indicative of familiarity with

<sup>1</sup> Ps. li. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxxxix. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Wisdom ix 13-17.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. i. 20.

the idea of the Holy Ghost as a Divine Agent. The words could not have been addressed to Joseph, except upon the hypothesis that this was so. The same conclusion may be drawn from the fuller, but equivalent, annunciation made to the Blessed Virgin, as recorded by St. Luke: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*<sup>1</sup> Again, in St. Matthew's Gospel we find St. John Baptist, in preaching concerning Him who was to come after him, and who was to be mightier than himself, using such words as these: *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire;*<sup>2</sup> where there is no explanation of the language, it being apparently assumed that those to whom the language was addressed would understand what it meant. So also it is recorded of St. John Baptist himself, *He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb;*<sup>3</sup> while of Elizabeth his mother it is said in like manner, *Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.*<sup>4</sup> The following passage may also be quoted: *Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*<sup>5</sup>

Besides and beyond all these notices of the operation of the Holy Spirit, we find very remarkable references to His agency in connection with the Lord Jesus Himself. Here are some examples. At the baptism of the Lord: *Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*<sup>6</sup> Again, after the baptism we read: *Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.*<sup>7</sup> And once more, we find the Lord in the

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke i. 35.    <sup>2</sup> St. Matt. iii. 11.    <sup>3</sup> St. Luke i. 15.    <sup>4</sup> St. Luke i. 41.

<sup>5</sup> St. Luke ii. 25, 26.

<sup>6</sup> St. Matt. iii. 16, 17.

<sup>7</sup> St. Luke iv. 1.

synagogue of Nazareth, when He stood up to read, applying to Himself the words of the prophet Isaiah, which have been already quoted: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. . . . And He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*<sup>1</sup>

The quotations which have been made in the preceding paragraphs, whether from the Old and New Testaments or from the Apocryphal book of Wisdom, are to be regarded not as the historical foundation of the eighth article of the Apostles' Creed, but rather as introductory to the remarks which will be offered concerning that historical foundation. These remarks will be directed chiefly towards two points, namely, (1) the position occupied by references to the Holy Ghost in the recorded teaching of our Lord, and (2) the account given in the New Testament of that which actually took place, and which was attributed to the agency of the Holy Ghost.

(1) With regard to the teaching of our Lord on the subject, it should be noted, lest the point should seem to have been overlooked, that definite doctrine concerning the Holy Ghost is to be found almost exclusively in discourses which are reported by St. John. It cannot be expected (as has been already intimated) that in the present volume, which has a totally different aim, the question of the authorship of the fourth Gospel should be discussed; but it may be well to observe, that even if the conclusion of the ancient Church and of some of the best of modern critics, which assign the Gospel to St. John, should be less sure than they are, it would still be difficult to believe that the teaching concerning the Holy Ghost, bound up as it is in the most intimate manner with the rest of the later discourses recorded in the fourth Gospel, came from any other source except the lips of Jesus Christ Himself. It is more difficult to assign these discourses to any other origin, than to believe, as

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke iv. 18-21.

the Church ever has believed, that they are the utterances of the Lord.

Moreover, it should be observed, that although it be true that definite teaching concerning the Holy Ghost is confined to the fourth Gospel, there are, nevertheless, many emphatic references to the subject in the language of our Lord as recorded in the first three. Note for example the command given to the Apostles by the Lord as their final commission, recorded by St. Matthew. *Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*<sup>1</sup> These are words which claim the highest place conceivable for the Holy Ghost: they intimate, though they do not positively assert, coequality with the Father and the Son: they contain in a baptismal formula, which ever has been, still is, and ever will be used, the concentrated essence of the theology of the Christian Church. The use of them, on such an occasion as one of the last interviews with the Apostles, would seem to assume the fact of some previous teaching similar to that which St. John records. Again, with reference to future troubles and persecutions, which impended upon those who were faithful to Himself, the Lord warns the disciples in these words: *When they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.*<sup>2</sup> It would be difficult to find language more emphatically asserting a Divine presence. Lastly, reference may be made to that which our Lord said of the sin which He describes as blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. *Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.*<sup>3</sup>

From such utterances as these, which (it will be noted) have been extracted from the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke respectively, it may be certainly concluded that the more definite teaching of our Lord, as presented to us in the Gospel of St. John, would be not altogether strange to the

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark xiii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xii. 10.



Apostles. In the later discourses of the Lord's ministry, which St. John has recorded, the teaching would be probably more definite, even more impressive, than any that had gone before : everything tends to lead us to believe that so it was intended to be. But there is no reason to suppose—rather is the contrary quite certain—that it was anything new to the disciples to hear of a Divine Person, or a Spiritual Power, acting on the spirits of men, and described as the Holy Ghost.

From these remarks upon the record of St. John, let us now pass to the consideration of some of the utterances of our Lord, as so recorded.

*Jesus answered and said . . . These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*<sup>1</sup> This passage identifies the Comforter, according to the English version, or the Paraclete, if we adopt the original word, with the Holy Ghost. Bearing this in mind, we may dwell with advantage upon such passages as the following. *I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him : but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*<sup>2</sup> Again : *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me.*<sup>3</sup> Once more : *It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment : of sin, because they believed not on Me ; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more ; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth : for He shall not speak of Himself ; but whatsoever He shall hear that*

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 23-26.<sup>2</sup> St. John, xiv. 16, 17.<sup>3</sup> St. John xv. 26.



*shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you.*<sup>1</sup>

No attempt will be made to explain these mysterious passages: that is not the purpose for which they have been quoted in this place: the purpose is to make it clear that the article of the Creed, which speaks of belief in the Holy Ghost, has an historical basis in this sense, namely, that the founder of our religion unquestionably recognised a Divine Person whom He so described. Unless we abandon altogether, contrary to every principle of criticism and every rule of right reason, the documentary evidence which we possess as to the teaching of Jesus Christ, it is impossible to deny that He delivered to His disciples a doctrine of the Holy Ghost.

(2) But there is another side from which the historical foundation of this article ought to be viewed.

We have been considering in the preceding paragraphs the references made by the Lord Jesus during His ministry on earth to the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, and His promises as to what the Holy Ghost should do. Now we have in the book of the Acts of the Apostles an account of that which is alleged actually to have taken place; and it is scarcely too much to say, that, if the Gospels can be rightly described as the history of the ministry of the Son, the Acts of the Apostles may be suitably described as the history of the ministry of the Holy Ghost. It will be observed that it is very much in this character that the book is in fact introduced to its readers; for in the first chapter we are told, that the Lord *being assembled together with them* (the Apostles), *commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*<sup>2</sup> And again in the same chapter we read: *Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*<sup>3</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvi. 7-14.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 4, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Acts i. 8.

would be expected, after such an introduction as this, that the agency of the Holy Ghost, whatever might be the precise nature and characteristics of His operations, would be a prominent feature of the subsequent part of the history.

And that this is in fact the case, every reader of the book of the Acts of the Apostles will have discovered. After the filling up of the place in the Apostolic College left vacant by the treachery of Judas Iscariot, the first event recorded is the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Ghost. The special circumstances of that event it is not necessary for the present argument to discuss: the point chiefly to be observed is this, that the great event of the day of Pentecost is manifestly assumed as the foundation of all that follows: the ministry of the Apostles starts from it: it is regarded as the fulfilment of the promise of Christ, and the day itself as the birthday of the Church.

It is almost superfluous to remind any reader of the Acts of the Apostles, that almost every page is impressed (as it were) with the stamp of the Holy Ghost. When Peter spoke before the Sanhedrim, in the matter of the disturbance arising out of the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, he was *filled with the Holy Ghost*.<sup>1</sup> When Peter and John were subsequently set free to return to their company, *they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word with boldness*.<sup>2</sup> Again, Ananias was condemned by Peter, because he had lied *to the Holy Ghost*; <sup>3</sup> and the same Apostle appeals to the Holy Ghost as a witness to the truth of the testimony of himself and of his fellows concerning Christ, saying, *We are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him*.<sup>4</sup> These few quotations are but samples of the book: it is scarcely an exaggeration to say, that it is impossible to read a passage of the book of the Acts of the Apostles of any considerable length without finding in it a reference more or less direct to the operation of the Holy Ghost, as something with which the Church was familiar, or (if the phrase may be permitted) as a recognised fact of Christian experience.

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 8.<sup>2</sup> Acts iv. 31.<sup>3</sup> Acts v. 3.<sup>4</sup> Acts v. 32.

In continuation and corroboration of what has been propounded concerning the Acts of the Apostles, it is right that some reference should be made to the testimony of the Apostolic Epistles. The reference needs not to be of a lengthened character. No one can doubt that a certain doctrine of the Holy Ghost—the particulars of the doctrine will not now be discussed—is worked up into the very substance of Apostolic teaching. It would be as reasonable to deny that the Apostles had heard of Jesus Christ, as to maintain that they did not recognise the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. Whether it be easy or possible for a reader to deduce, without assistance, a uniform and consistent doctrine from the combined teaching of the Apostles, is not now the question: the question is, whether there is historical testimony to the belief of the first followers of Christ in a Holy Ghost; whether, in fact, the Apostles would have assented to the eighth article of the Creed, which is now under discussion.

A few passages, out of many, shall be cited, in order to supply an answer to this question.

Take first the following remarkable and most familiar verse: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.*<sup>1</sup> The form of address contained in these words is notable, because the relation of the Holy Ghost to human souls is treated co-ordinately with the love of God, which may be regarded as the feeling of a Father who is in heaven towards the intelligent creatures whom He has made, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is interpreted in another place by the reminder that though rich He became poor for our sakes, that we through His poverty might be rich. An Apostle who could write in this way must have been as familiar with the thought of the Father creating, the Son redeeming, and the Holy Ghost sanctifying, as any child in the nineteenth century who learns the Church Catechism. Again, we have the striking assertion that *no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 3.

Again: *Through Him*, that is, Jesus Christ, *we have access by one Spirit unto the Father*.<sup>1</sup> Again, we have the phrase, *joy of the Holy Ghost*.<sup>2</sup> And, once more, we read that *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*.<sup>3</sup> Quotations of this kind might be multiplied to any extent.

It may perhaps be well to remark, that the phrase *Holy Ghost*, or *Holy Spirit*, appears in some instances to refer to the Divine Person, who is spoken of in the Creed under that name, and in some to refer to the influence or operative agency of the same Divine Person. The remark is for some purposes important, but does not affect the present argument. The reader may be reminded of the interesting conclusion of Bishop Middleton,<sup>4</sup> that the Divine Person is intended where the definite article occurs (τὸ πνεῦμα), and the influence of the Holy Ghost where the article is omitted.

There is another view which should be taken of the historical side of this article, and which is, perhaps, more striking than that which depends upon the testimony of words. The testimony of words may be strong: that of deeds is stronger. It should be observed, that we have in the New Testament two histories of the acts and habits and characters of the same men in different circumstances. There can be no question that the Peter and John, of whom we read in the four Gospels, are the same men as those of whom we read under the same names in the Acts of the Apostles; and very little question, if any, that they are the men who wrote certain letters bearing those names. Now, having conceded the personal identity of the Peter and John in the two histories, let the student of the histories compare the pictures presented to him. It will be obvious that there is a marvellous difference between the portraits. Looking first at the portrait in the Gospels, then at that which is drawn in the Acts of the

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thes. i. 6.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Pet. i. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *The Doctrine of the Greek Article*, Part II. chap. i. In the first edition of this book I wrote that this conclusion 'does not appear to be accepted by some of the most recent scholars.' I have withdrawn the remark, chiefly in consequence of observing that Bishop Westcott maintains the old view. He writes upon St. John vii. 39, 'When the term (Spirit, πνεῦμα) occurs in this form (i.e. without the article), it marks an operation, or manifestation, or gift of the Spirit, and not the personal Spirit.'



Apostles, it is obvious that a transformation has somehow been brought about—the most difficult of all transformations, that of character. The remark is applicable to the whole body of the disciples, so far as their doings are reported; but special reference is made to Peter and John, because of their prominence in both departments of sacred history. How Peter denied his Master three times we all know: and John was amongst those who *forsook Him and fled*.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, without quoting these special acts of weakness, due to circumstances of special trial and difficulty, it is impossible not to note in the whole average character and behaviour of the disciples, as depicted in the Gospel histories, a weakness and want of apprehension of the character of their Master, which seems strange to us who look back upon the history as illustrated by subsequent events. But when we observe these same men after having been left to themselves by the ascension of their Lord, they are as changed as changed can be: their hesitation and cowardice are all gone: the thought of giving up the work entrusted to them never occurs to their minds as a possibility: their mouths are opened after the great day of Pentecost in an entirely new fashion: they have a tale to tell of a crucified, risen, and ascended Master, which they tell with perfect clearness and confidence, and without the least fear of consequences: they have become preachers to the whole world of truths, which they believe it much concerns the whole world to accept: they are conscious of a high commission and an immeasurable responsibility, and they act accordingly. If anyone had asked the Apostles themselves how this change had come about, there can be no doubt as to the answer which they would have given. They would have said that they were what they were, that they preached what they preached, that they did what they did, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

It will be observed that in what has been presented in the preceding pages the chief points are two: first, that a new order of things was promised by Jesus Christ, which was to be brought about by the agency of the Holy Ghost; and secondly,

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxvi. 56.



that a new order of things actually was brought about, and that the Apostles attributed the change to this same Divine agency. We can go as far as this without attempting to define the doctrine of the Holy Ghost accurately, and without introducing any of the controversies which have arisen in the Church from time to time. It is not argued that the definition of the doctrine is unnecessary, or that the controversies are unimportant; but it is urged, that a merely historical view of the subject is sufficient to enable a student of Holy Scripture, and of the history of the primitive Church, to make a great step towards belief in the Holy Ghost. It may not be possible in this way to arrive at full assurance of faith; but the undeniable belief of the early Church, with the consideration of the origin and the consequences of the same, will prove to be a good preparation for the reception of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost in all its Catholic completeness.

2. We now come to the consideration of the eighth article of the Creed as resting upon faith.

In dealing with this part of the subject, it should in the first place be observed, that, as the article stands in the Creed, it may be asserted with truth that it appears to introduce concerning the Godhead nothing beyond that which has already been affirmed. The words of the article are simply these, *I believe in the Holy Ghost*, or in *the Holy Spirit*. Upon these words it may be argued that *God is a Spirit*:<sup>1</sup> this truth was declared in plain terms by Jesus Christ when He spoke to the woman of Samaria; and so everyone believes, whose belief rests upon any sound foundation. But if a Spirit, then also a *Holy Spirit*: to impute to God any character other than that of holiness, is abhorrent from every conception of the Divine nature. Consequently, when we say *I believe in God*, we may be regarded as implicitly confessing faith in God as a Holy Spirit. And thus the latest portion of the Apostles' Creed might be thought to add nothing to the earliest with regard to the being of God.

Now it is very desirable that a Creed, which is in its

<sup>1</sup> St. John iv. 24.

primary intention a baptismal formula, should be as simple in its expression and as free from theological difficulties as possible; and we may be thankful that the whole teaching of the Creed concerning the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is compressed into the simple words, *I believe in the Holy Ghost*. Nevertheless, it is impossible for any thoughtful reader of Holy Scripture, or any student of theology, or even any child who learns the Church Catechism, to imagine that nothing more is intended by profession of belief in the Holy Ghost than the simple assertion that *God is a Spirit*: therefore it may be well, not only to refer to what has already been said upon the subject in this chapter, but also to quote the teaching of the Nicene Creed, and that of the Hymn *Quicumque vult*, commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius.

The teaching of the Apostles' Creed is thus expanded in the Nicene Creed, or rather in the Creed which commonly bears that name, and is so described in the book of Common Prayer.

*I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets.*

In the Athanasian Hymn we have the following statements:

*There is one person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.*

*But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.*

*So the Father is God, the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God.*

*And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.*

*The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten.*

*The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created, but begotten.*

*The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.*

*So that in all things, as is aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.*

These extracts from two great Creeds of the Church, may be

taken as a sufficient exposition of the Catholic doctrine on the subject of the Holy Ghost.

It is not intended in this place to discuss the doctrine so expounded, with reference to all controversial points which may in proper circumstances need discussion. For example, I shall not introduce the question of the 'double procession'—*who proceedeth from the Father and the Son*—the propriety of the introduction of the latter words of the clause, or the possibility of so interpreting the words as to enable East and West to accept the doctrine contained in the clause as modified by the Western Church. Neither shall I deal with difficulties arising from the conception of three Persons and one Substance—the former not to be *confounded*, the latter not to be *divided*. Such matters as these demand, in any complete exposition of the Creeds of the Church, full discussion, both with reference to the heresies against which the statements are directed, and with reference to the meaning and the difficulties of the statements themselves. But all this department of the subject lies outside the special purpose of this book. That upon which I chiefly desire to lay stress is, that any difficulties which may attach to belief in the Holy Ghost, as the doctrine is propounded in the Creeds, is of an altogether different kind from those, which present themselves as involved in the supernatural history of the Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the Holy Ghost is of necessity supernatural, as everything which relates to God must be. God and nature stand in the relation of antithesis to each other: the Divine must transcend the natural, just because it is Divine: but the difficulty of thinking and moving in the sphere of the Divine, is quite different from that which is involved in the reception as true of a reported resurrection from the dead. The region in which the difficulty lies is metaphysical rather than physical: the argument against belief which depends upon experience, and of which unbelievers have made so much in the history of our Lord, cannot here claim admittance: we are in a region in which such arguments, from the nature of the case, do not pass current.

So that, after accepting belief in God the Father as the Creator of all things, and in the Incarnation of the Son as

exhibited in the Birth, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ, the question concerning the Holy Ghost really resolves itself into this—What was the teaching upon the subject delivered by Jesus Christ and His Apostles and the early Church? For the purpose of this book it may be assumed as uncontradicted, that the doctrine to which the believer pledges himself has this original and primitive authority; and this the more easily, because the article in the Apostles' Creed pledges the Christian who repeats it only to belief in the Holy Ghost, without specifying the doctrine more particularly. But whatever may be the dogmatic points which the doctrine contains, there can be no serious intellectual difficulty to him who has made his footing sure as far as this point in the Creed: the believer in the Father and the Son will find no serious obstacle to belief in the Holy Ghost.

Perhaps it may even be asserted, that he who has professed his belief in the first two Persons of the Holy Trinity will experience in the profession of belief in the third a sense of completeness and symmetry, which will aid him in the hearty acceptance of belief in all three—acceptance of the great doctrine of three Persons in one God. For there is profound philosophy as well as orthodoxy in that passage of the Church Catechism, which teaches the child to say concerning the Apostles' Creed, *First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world. Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind. Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.* The reference here made to the operations of the three Persons in the Trinity, helps much towards the apprehension of the Persons themselves; it is even difficult to distinguish between the Persons, except by reference to that which each has done: and though it is manifestly impossible to describe the Divine Being objectively by reference to anything human, it is not unreasonable to hold that for human purposes and with reference to the limitation of human powers, it may be true that the mysteries of God will be best described and apprehended by consideration of the wants of man. It is not sufficient to say that God may be contemplated as God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sanctifier;



but the attempt to contemplate God in these three characters is a good introduction to the complete doctrine of the Church, as expounded in the Creeds.

One other view of the nature of the foundation of faith on which this article stands may be suggested for consideration.

The Holy Ghost is represented as an active spiritual agent in the Church in early times. It was also promised by the Lord Jesus Christ, and has ever been believed by His Church, that the agency of the Holy Ghost was to be of a permanent kind. He was to *abide for ever*.<sup>1</sup> Hence it might be expected that some ground for belief in the Holy Ghost would be found in the experience of the Church in all ages. Belief in the Holy Ghost would thus be belief, not in something having its existence in the past, but in a present living power. It is strongly maintained by many—in fact, it may be said to be universally held amongst Christian people—that evidence of this present living power is not wanting in modern times. Few would claim the manifestation of an agency capable of being recognised by the senses, similar to that of which we read in the Acts of the Apostles; as when the Spirit was manifested *as the sound of a rushing mighty wind*; <sup>2</sup> or as when the *place was shaken* <sup>3</sup> where the Apostles were assembled; or as when the Apostles Peter and John having laid their hands upon the people of Samaria who had been baptized by Philip the Evangelist, the persons so baptized and confirmed *received the Holy Ghost*<sup>4</sup> in such a palpable manner that Simon Magus was induced to offer money on condition that he should receive the power of imparting the gift; or as when, after receiving the Holy Ghost, believers *spoke with tongues and prophesied*; <sup>5</sup> though it must be granted that claims have occasionally in modern times been set up to such supernatural manifestations: but without claiming that kind of operation to which the New Testament writings give testimony, there would be a general consensus of earnest Christian men in favour of the belief of a real spiritual action, capable of being assigned without fanaticism to the influence of the Holy Ghost. This action is regarded as being manifested in results produced

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Acts iv. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Acts viii. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xix. 6.



on a large scale, and also in results of a more private and individual character. The persistent life and the growth of the Church, notwithstanding opposition of varied kinds, the power of renewing its youth which the faith of Christ appears to possess, and the manner in which the religion which Christ established adapts itself to the varied wants and conditions of mankind—these, and such-like, phenomena are regarded as supporting the persuasion, that there is a Divine influence at work; and this influence is attributed to the Holy Spirit of God. Whether this view can be substantiated, and whether a sufficient explanation can be given of phenomena which seem to suggest other conclusions, will not be here argued: it is sufficient to say, that belief in the operation of the Holy Spirit as thus manifested is held by many good men, who do not entertain a doubt as to its soundness. And the same thing may be said, with still greater emphasis, concerning the work of the Holy Ghost upon individual souls. It is not one fanatic here, and another there, who believes that he has been converted *from the power of Satan unto God*<sup>1</sup> by a sudden and miraculous operation; rather it is the general persuasion of all earnest believers in Jesus Christ that it is the Holy Ghost who sanctifies them. They hold no belief more strongly than that which expresses their own weakness and their absolute need of Divine help, and they feel sure that they are not deceived; they cannot prove their belief to the satisfaction of others—especially to the satisfaction of scoffers—but they have a sober conviction which forbids them to doubt: so that, in fact, it is rather by looking into the experience of their own spiritual lives, than by reading books and by argument and discussion, that many men are led to say, *I believe in the Holy Ghost*.

Perhaps this view of the subject may be regarded as corresponding to the words of the Nicene Creed, *the giver of life* (τὸ ζωοποιόν). It has been said in a preceding page that it lies outside the special purpose of this book to discuss the various doctrinal questions which are raised by the Nicene Creed; but the character of the Holy Ghost as *life-giving* must be implicitly

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvi. 18.

or explicitly contained in any discussion which deals with the subject at all. For to give life would seem to be precisely and emphatically the work of the Spirit; we have already seen that Holy Scripture almost commences with a reference to the action of the Spirit: *the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters*: and it would seem to be implied that it was in virtue of this spiritual influence that the Word of God had its creative power: the earth which God had created burst forth with varied forms of life because the Spirit was there. A similar conclusion follows from the history of the communication of life to man. *The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*<sup>1</sup> The words are more striking in the Vulgate, where the Latin preserves the connection between breath and the spirit. *Formavit Dominus Deus hominem de limo terræ, et inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitæ, et factus est homo in animam viventem.* Thus Holy Scripture begins with a *Giver of life*: the solution of the great mystery of life is that life is the gift of God; and God as the giver of life is God the Holy Ghost. But the same conception pervades the whole Bible: sometimes the life given may be of the lowest and simplest kind, as when fish were made to swim through the sea, and fowls to fly above the earth in the open firmament; sometimes the life is of a higher kind, as when man became a living soul; and sometimes the life is of that highest kind of all, as when men are regenerated, *born of water and of the Spirit*,<sup>2</sup> made *a new creature*,<sup>3</sup> so that they can say that *they live, yet not they, but Christ in them*,<sup>4</sup> and that their *life is hid with Christ in God*.<sup>5</sup> There are infinite depths and breadths in the term *life*; but it would seem that all manifestations of life are to be attributed to the Spirit of God, and that when the Spirit of God is spoken of as the giver of the highest form of life, then He is usually described emphatically as the *Holy Spirit*, or the Holy Ghost.

It may be added that it is of infinite importance that he who professes his belief in the Holy Ghost should regard Him, not

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 7.<sup>2</sup> St. John iii. 5.<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.<sup>4</sup> Gal. ii. 20.<sup>5</sup> Col. iii. 3.

as a divine person who once gave life to an inanimate world, or who in former days spake by prophets, or in former days animated the Church, but as a living and energetic power in our own days. It is of little use to believe in a Holy Ghost *the giver of life*, if this sentence belongs to ancient history, and has no present force. A giver of life in olden days, who has no life to give now, is no giver of life at all. *I believe in the Holy Ghost* must mean, I believe in Him who is the source of life to me, and without whom I cannot live.

3. Something shall now be said concerning the share which may be justly assigned to human reason in the foundations of belief in the Holy Ghost. The subject is a perplexing one: it seems more or less clear that a share may be assigned: it is full of doubt what that share should be—all the more so, because there is no clear guidance to be found, so far as I know, at the hands of those who have discussed the subject hitherto.

The full apprehension of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as held by the Church, undoubtedly belongs exclusively to those who enjoy Christian teaching. The precise dogmatic statements contained in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds have nothing analogous to them elsewhere. Nevertheless, it is interesting to ask whether outside the Christian Church there may not be found faint guesses at truth, which are too valuable to be quite neglected and despised. We need not be surprised if so it should be. As there has ever been a feeling after God, if haply men might find Him, and as this instinct has taught us that *in Him we live, and move, and have our being*, and that *we are His offspring*,<sup>1</sup> so also we might expect that the sense of moral imperfection and of the need of help in weakness would lead the human heart to guess, and gradually to believe, that there must be some spiritual agency by which human weakness can be strengthened, and men enabled to become pure and good. This guessing and believing may be taken as at least pointing in the direction of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost.

But, to pass from the general to the particular, it may be well to specify two philosophers, who are commonly regarded as

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 28.

having, more than others, approximated in their speculations to the doctrine of the Christian Church—Plato and Seneca.

The so-called Trinity of Plato has been the subject of much discussion; some of the early Fathers, and those who have followed them, appearing to claim the great philosopher as having well nigh anticipated, and, therefore, unintentionally supported, the Catholic doctrine, while other writers have asserted that nothing of the kind is really to be found in Plato's writings. In our own times the controversy does not possess much active vitality; nevertheless, it cannot be quite passed by. I shall deal with it, not by bringing to the front my own opinion, but by quoting what has been written by persons whose conclusions are worthy of respectful attention.

Cæsar Morgan writes as follows:

After a minute and impartial examination of the writings of Plato, I cannot find anything which sufficiently proves him to have had even an obscure knowledge of the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity. None of his immediate followers taught it: none of his personal enemies or philosophical rivals urged it as an objection against him: none of the sects which branched off from the Academy professed it. When the arts and learning of Greece were imported into Italy: when poets, philosophers, and statesmen considered it as the most noble employment

*inter sylvas Academi querere verum:*

when Plato was esteemed to have spoken as it were the language of the gods; and all the ingenuity and eloquence of Rome were exerted to unfold his principles, and recommend his conclusions—during this long and enlightened period no traces are to be found in the works of heathen writers of this profound, this peculiar doctrine.

The discovery was not made till philosophers became Christians, and Christians became philosophers. The converted philosopher endeavoured to shew to his unconverted brethren the superior brilliancy of the light which he enjoyed as a Christian. To this purpose he contended that Christianity was not without its evidences even amongst themselves: that intimations of the sublime doctrines of revelation were to be found in the writings of the philosophers of Greece: that those sages to whom they looked up with so much



reverence had nothing whereof to glory: that they were mere retailers of scraps and fragments from Holy Writ, mutilated by their ignorance, and obscured by their speculations.

Again the same learned writer remarks:

The cultivators of human wisdom appear to have been total strangers to [the Platonic Trinity] till it was disclosed to them by a teacher of philosophy [Plotinus] who had been educated in the bosom of Christianity. Then, and not till then, they used it as a key to unlock the abstract subtilties of Plato, and to throw a decent veil over the extravagant and licentious fables of Pagan mythology.<sup>1</sup>

This is very weighty authority, and it is supported by the opinion of the late M. Guizot, who writes:

In no part of his [Plato's] writings do we find a true personification of the pretended Beings of which he is said to have formed a Trinity: and if this personification existed it would equally apply to many other notions of which might be formed many different trinities. This error, into which many ancient as well as modern interpreters of Plato have fallen, was very natural.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, it is strange that such a notion as that which is implied by speaking of the Trinity of Plato should be absolutely void of foundation. Let us listen for a moment to Cudworth, no mean authority on such a subject:

These three Platonic hypostases therefore seem to be really nothing else but *Infinite Goodness*, *Infinite Wisdom*, and *Infinite Active Love and Power*, not as mere qualities or accidents, but as substantial things; that have some kind of subordination one to another; all concurring together to make up one Θεός, or Divinity, just as the centre, immovable distance, and movable circumference concurrently make up one sphere.<sup>3</sup>

I feel reluctant entirely to sacrifice such a conclusion as that which Cudworth has here announced. Granting that much has

<sup>1</sup> *Investigation of the Trinity of Plato and of Philo Judæus*. Edited for the Syndics of the University Press. Cambridge, 1853.

<sup>2</sup> Note to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, quoted by Dean Milman with approval. Vol. ii. p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> *Intellectual System*, p. 591.



been put into Plato by subsequent writers, and that there may be much doubt and controversy as to what the philosopher himself intended, still it must be admitted that in the supposition of a third hypostasis, which the English philosopher identifies with *Infinite Active Love and Power*, there may be a precious foreshadowing of a feeling after the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. It is, however, candidly acknowledged that any such anticipation is of an obscure and recondite kind.

It is different with Seneca. Whatever may be the real meaning of the language used by him, his words certainly make distinct mention of a Holy Spirit; so much so that he has been claimed as enunciating doctrine equivalent to that of the Christian Church. There is, in fact, an undoubted resemblance between much that Seneca wrote and much that is to be found in the New Testament. 'He is constantly cited with approbation by some of the most eminent Christian Fathers. Tertullian, Lactantius, even St. Augustine himself, quote his words with marked admiration, and St. Jerome appeals to him as "our Seneca." The Council of Trent go further still, and quote him as though he were an acknowledged Father of the Church. For many centuries there were men who accepted as genuine the spurious letters supposed to have been interchanged between Seneca and St. Paul, in which Seneca is made to express a wish to hold among Pagans the same beneficial position which St. Paul held in the Christian world.'<sup>1</sup>

So far as our present purpose is concerned, it may be sufficient to quote such words as the following: 'God is near thee, he is with thee. Yes, Lucilius, I say, a holy spirit (*sacer spiritus*) resides within us, the observer of good and evil, and our constant guardian. And as we treat him, he treats us. At least no good man is without a God. Could anyone ever rise above the power of fortune without his assistance? It is he that inspires us with thoughts upright, just, and pure. We do not indeed pretend to say *what God*; but that a God dwells

<sup>1</sup> *Seekers after God*, Archdeacon Farrar, p. 5. Chapter xv. contains a collection of parallels between Seneca and Holy Scripture.

in the breast of every good man is certain.’<sup>1</sup> Again: ‘Do you wonder that men should ascend to the gods? God descends to men; or rather he dwells within them: there is no good man without God. The divine seeds are sown in the human breast, which, if they meet with a good husbandman, produce fruits like their original, and a divine crop springs up: but if with a bad husbandman, they die as in a barren and marshy ground; or bring forth cockle and weeds instead of corn.’<sup>2</sup>

Some of the language above quoted is very striking, its resemblance to passages of Holy Scripture remarkable, and it would be an ungracious task to explain it away, or to lessen its value as indicating the manner in which Gentile philosophers have felt after God, if haply they might find Him. Nevertheless, it must be confessed that the resemblance between the stoicism of Seneca and the teaching of St. Paul is not so close, when a careful examination is made, as might at first sight of a few scattered phrases appear. On this subject I will quote a passage from Bishop Lightfoot’s essay, entitled ‘St. Paul and Seneca,’ which forms an appendix to his edition of the Epistle to the Philippians.

From the recognition of God’s fatherly relation to man important consequences flow. In almost Apostolic language, Seneca describes the trials and sufferings of good men as the chastisement of a wise and beneficent parent: ‘God has a fatherly mind towards good men and loves them stoutly; and, saith He, let them be harassed with toils, with pains, with losses, that they may gather true strength! These therefore whom God approves, whom He loves, them He hardens, He chastises, He disciplines. . . .’

Still more strikingly Christian is his language when he speaks of God, who ‘is near us, is with us, is within,’ of a holy spirit residing in us, the guardian and observer of our good and evil deeds. ‘By what other name,’ he asks, ‘can we call an upright and good and great mind except (a) god lodging in a human body?’ The spark of a heavenly flame has alighted on the hearts of men. They are associated with, they are members of God. The mind came from God, and yearns towards God.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Epistle xli.

<sup>2</sup> Epistle lxxiii. These extracts are made from Dr. Morell’s version of *Seneca’s Epistles*, 1816.

<sup>3</sup> P. 279.

But then subsequently the same writer warns his readers that they must not be led away by mere coincidences of language:

The *sacer spiritus* of Seneca may be translated literally by the *Holy Spirit*, the πνεῦμα ἅγιον of scriptural language; but it signifies something quite different. His declaration that we are 'members of God' is in words identical with certain expressions of the Apostle; but its meaning has nothing in common. Both the one and the other are modes of stating the Stoic dogma, that the universe is one great animal pervaded by one soul or principle of life, and that into men, as fractions of this whole, as limbs of this body, is transfused a portion of the universal spirit. It is almost a purely physical conception, and has no strictly theological value.

I venture to think that Bishop Lightfoot's verdict is somewhat too severe, and that there is at least a guess at Divine truth in Seneca's views: certain it is that this has been the more general impression, and it is that which the heart seems most disposed to adopt. It has sometimes occurred to me as possible, that, although the theory of communication between St. Paul and Seneca breaks down, there may have been in Seneca's time, partly through the Jewish residents in Rome, and partly through Christian teachers, something like Jewish or Christian doctrine floating in the air; and that an unconscious influence in the direction of such doctrine may have been an element in Seneca's philosophy. This, however, is thrown out as the barest suggestion. The main conclusion to which I come is this: that human reason may perhaps, in very special cases, have led men towards the Christian doctrine of the Holy Ghost; but that the indications of this leading are at the best only faint and not beyond question.

Whether this conclusion will hold with regard to Oriental philosophies I dare not say. Spiritual ideas have generally travelled from East to West, not in the opposite direction; and it may be that in the highly spiritual philosophies and religious ideas of the East, there are thoughts which a Christian would gladly recognise as analogous to the doctrine of Holy Scripture and the Creed, and as shewing that though man cannot by searching actually find out God, he can nevertheless

feel after Him, and in so doing become possessed of much precious truth.

Nevertheless, so far as I can ascertain, there is not to be found in the East, any more than in the West, much that is really valuable with regard to the subject now under discussion. Professor Hardwick, for example, writes as follows :

It is difficult to understand how any one whose judgment was not clouded by some theory of his own respecting the extent of the primæval revelation, or who on the other hand was not desirous at all hazards to impair the sacred character of Christianity, could ever have adduced the Hindu Triad as the parallel of that transcendent mystery which forms the basis of the Catholic faith. Sir William Jones, who commonly showed himself as eager as the rest of his contemporaries to detect the slightest shadow of affinity between the Bible and the sacred books of India, was in this case strenuous in denying the reality of the alleged resemblances.

Buddhism, in like manner, had in later times put forth its own peculiar triad. Intelligence, the first principle, was, in the mysteries of Nepal, associated with Dharma, the principle of matter ; while a mediating power, or Sauga, was combined with the two others in order to secure their union and harmonious co-operation. But this latter class of triads will more fitly come before us, on proceeding to examine what is called the Platonic Trinity, a doctrine which has often since the days of Plotinus been put forward as subversive of the loftier claims of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, though this article has been marked with the three symbols H., F., and R., it must be confessed that the portion of the weight sustained by the reason of man is comparatively small. So far as belief in the Holy Ghost is part of belief in God, no doubt an appeal may be made to human reason. It has already been laid down, or at all events argued, that belief in God must ultimately rest upon reason as its foundation ; but as soon as we go beyond bare belief in God as the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and consider His more special relations to mankind, the light of reason seems to fail or to be insufficient, and faith or revelation must be appealed to

<sup>1</sup> *Christ and other Masters*, Part II. p. 105.



for help. I do not forget that Coleridge has propounded the belief, that the doctrine of the Trinity may be established on the ground of pure reason :<sup>1</sup> it is interesting even to know that this belief has been propounded : but when I look for the performance of the promise, I confess that the philosopher goes down to such black depths that I find it impossible to follow him.

Nevertheless, I should be sorry to intimate my own persuasion that a demonstration or speculation, such as that of which Coleridge dreamed, is an impossibility. One fears to express one's thoughts upon so solemn and difficult a subject, lest (as has not unfrequently happened) that which begins with apparently innocent speculation should develop into some ancient and condemned heresy. Few thoughts on old subjects in this period of the world's history are both new and true. Yet I have sometimes thought it possible that the being of the Holy Ghost might be as necessary a consequence of the being of the Father and that of the Son, as the existence of the third side of a triangle is the consequence of the other two, or the existence of a third resultant force is the consequence of the co-operation of two forces on the same point. The procession of the third person of the Holy Trinity may be a divinely necessary procession : without confounding the persons or dividing the substance, the procession may perhaps be regarded as involved in the complete conception of the being of God : in fact, if we could so far enter into the truth of that being, as to grasp the mystery of Father and Son, we should probably find that it was impossible not to include in the mystery the being of the Holy Ghost.

<sup>1</sup> 'I am clearly convinced that the scriptural and only true idea of God will, in its development, be found to involve the idea of the Trinity. But I am likewise convinced that, previously to the promulgation of the Gospel, the doctrine had no claim on the faith of mankind : though it might have been a legitimate contemplation for a speculative philosopher, a theorem in metaphysics valid in the schools.

'I form a certain notion in my mind, and say : This is what I understand by the term, God. From books and conversation I find that the learned generally connect the same notion with the same word. I then apply the rules laid down by the masters of logic, for the involution and evolution of terms, and prove (to as many as agree with me in my premisses) that the notion, God, involves the notion, Trinity.'—*Aids to Reflection*, p. 126.



These remarks point to, or perhaps depend for their force upon, a further consideration, namely, whether it be possible to conceive the doctrine of the Holy Trinity entirely apart from all reference to the manifestation of God to His human creatures. The point is one which it is difficult to express in words; but I would endeavour to formulate it as follows. Suppose, if it be possible to do so, as perhaps it is, that no creation existed, that there was no outcome of Divine operation, such as we witness in *the Heavens and the Earth*, then would or would not the Divine nature have any relation to triune existence? It is manifestly difficult to answer so transcendental a question; but I am disposed to suggest that in the condition supposed, absolute unity, without any kind of addition or qualification, would most truly represent God. In other words, may it not be, that the Divine essence becomes triune in creation? If so, then trinity in unity is the only form in which man, as being himself a part of the creation, can rightly conceive God. At all events, this kind of method of regarding the doctrine of the Holy Trinity appears to me to have in it gleams of light. When a distinguished theological writer tells us that the assertion, 'three times one are three,' is true in arithmetic but not in theology, I cannot but feel that the effect is to put a terrible stumbling-block in the way of those who are invited to accept the Christian Creed. It is possible to exhibit the triune being of God in a light which shall commend it to the highest human intelligence, as a doctrine to which the reason may do homage; and it is possible to exhibit it in such a manner as to make thoughtful people feel that they cannot accept it without doing violence to their reasoning faculties.

'A full living knowledge,' writes Bishop Martensen,<sup>1</sup> 'a comprehensive intuition of the essential Trinity is impossible to created minds; for we are unable to represent to ourselves the esoteric glory of God, and in this connection we may say, *The triune God dwells in light which no man can approach.* A living and clear intuition of the triune essence of God is only possible to us so far as it has revealed itself in the economy

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 106.

of the universe, in the works of creation, redemption, and sanctification.' This writer distinguishes between the *economic* and the *essential* view of the doctrine of the Trinity. The distinction seems both real and important; but it must be confessed, that when we pass from the economic to the essential, we feel that we are in a presence which causes angels to veil their faces, and in which mute adoration seems more suitable than argumentative discussion.

Let these few words with regard to philosophical speculation suffice; and let it be asserted that the truest philosophy, because the most simple and the most practical, is that which is to be found in the Church Catechism, where the child professes that it learns from the Creed chiefly to believe, first, in God the Father, who made me, and all the world; secondly, in God the Son, who redeemed me, and all mankind; thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God. This is philosophy within the reach of a child: it is philosophy which may satisfy the wisest and most mature. History, faith, and reason may all in their proper place and measure be adduced in its support.



## CHAPTER X

### ARTICLE IX

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

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*On this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it—ST. MATTHEW xvi. 18*

AN ENGLISH BAPTISMAL CREED.

A.D. 1543.

1. *Credis in Deum Patrem omnipotentem,  
Creatorem cæli et terræ ?*  
*Credo.*
2. *Credis et in Jesum Christum, Filium ejus  
unicum,  
Dominum nostrum,*
3. *Natum,*
4. *Et passum ?*  
*Credo.*
8. *Credis et in Spiritum Sanctum ;*
9. *Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam ;  
Sanctorum communionem ;*
10. *Peccatorum remissionem ;*
11. *Carnis resurrectionem ;*
12. *Vitam æternam post mortem ?*  
*Credo.*

*Harmonia Symbolica, p. 113.*



## CHAPTER X.

## ARTICLE IX.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH; THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.<sup>1</sup>  
(H., F.)

THIS article of the Creed naturally divides itself into two parts. The Nicene Creed does not contain the second clause, while it expresses the first in the fuller and more particular form, 'One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.' This Nicene form may perhaps be found to throw some light upon the simpler expression of the Apostles' Creed: but while it throws light, and is in that respect valuable, it adds nothing new; it develops a meaning which only needs development, being there already. This will appear more clearly as we proceed.

<sup>1</sup> 'Rufinus and other writers of the Western Church lay much stress on the omission of the preposition (*in*) in this and the remaining articles, in contradistinction to its insertion before the name of each of the Persons of the Sacred Trinity, in Articles I., II. and VIII. respectively. This distinction does not, however, appear to have been attended to, even in the West, in early times, for in Cyprian's Creed we have *Credo in vitam æternam, &c.* But after Rufinus's age so much stress was laid upon it, that even the Constantinopolitan formula, *In unam sanctam, Catholicam, et Apostolicam Ecclesiam* (as it stood in strict accordance with the original in the most ancient versions), was altered into *Unam Catholicam, &c.*, or, as we have it in our version, "I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church." The Oriental Creeds generally disregarded the distinction.' —*Harmonia Symbolica*, p. 144.

Aquinas writes: Si dicatur, *In sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam*, hoc est intelligendum secundum quod fides nostra refertur ad Spiritum Sanctum, qui sanctificat Ecclesiam, ut sit sensus: *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum sanctificantem Ecclesiam*; sed melius est, et secundum commune usum, ut non ponatur ibi, *In*, sed simpliciter dicatur, *Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam*: sicut etiam Leo Papa dicit. —*Sum. Theol. Secunda Secundæ*, Qu. I. Art. IX.

### 1. *The Holy Catholic Church.*

The whole of the ninth article of the Creed has been marked with the two symbols H. and F.; but it may be at once said that the symbol H. applies only to the clause now under consideration. A very slight examination will prove that there is in this clause a very important historical element; and this it will be our business to put in evidence, before we consider the manner and degree in which faith is necessary for the fuller apprehension of the meaning of this portion of the Creed.

If we examine the four Gospels, as containing the fullest, indeed almost the only, record of the intentions and the deeds of Jesus Christ, we cannot fail to come to the conclusion that His principal purpose was to establish a company, a congregation, a body or corporation, (call it what we may,) which was to exist as a permanent institution and to perform a great work for the benefit of the world. It may be said—and in a certain sense every disciple of Christ would accept the suggestion—that the idea of this institution was based upon, or was an extension of, that which was exhibited by the Jewish Church. The Jews had amongst them a settled order of worship, religious observances, bonds of spiritual fellowship, which they regarded as of Divine appointment, and which constituted them in their own opinion a peculiar people. They admitted persons outside their Church to a participation of their spiritual privileges, though sparingly and under strict conditions. We read of proselytes, and we know that there were degrees of proselytism—Proselytes of the Gate and Proselytes of the Law—the closest and most privileged degree conferring a position nearly equivalent to that of the actual seed of Abraham. Thus it was admitted, though too often (it may be) grudgingly, and without a sufficient sense of the privilege of being able to benefit their less favoured brethren, that the Jews held their Church, according to the phrase applied by Bishop Butler to the religion of Christ, as ‘a trust in behalf of mankind’; and the conception of a religious society, which should exist for the conversion of those outside it and for the purpose of conferring

benefits upon those who should be so converted, was one which was not introduced by Jesus Christ, but was already growing, though with stunted growth, when He came into the world.

Moreover, there would seem to have been a notion, having perhaps its ground in the utterances of the Prophets, and certainly much fostered and supported by them, that the extension of the Jewish Church would in the latter days be much greater, more rapid, and more striking, than in the earlier period of its existence. It would be difficult for a thoughtful Jew to come to any other conclusion when he read in his sacred books such passages as the following :

*It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*<sup>1</sup> *And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*<sup>2</sup> Or again: *It shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord.*<sup>3</sup>

Putting together the thought of the extension of the Jewish Church with that other thought which gained such possession of the Jewish mind and imagination, namely, the thought of a Messiah, we cannot be surprised that we should read in the Gospels of devout persons who were *waiting for the kingdom of God*.<sup>4</sup> This expectation of the kingdom of God was public property: probably it assumed somewhat different forms to different minds; some anticipations would be more spiritual than others. Old Simeon was ready to depart when he had seen his hopes realised by the appearance of a child whom he could take up in his arms. *Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.*<sup>5</sup> To others probably the conception of the kingdom of God was degraded to the thought of a Joshua, a David, or a Judas Maccabeus, who could set the people of God

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah ii. 2.<sup>2</sup> Micah iv. 2.<sup>3</sup> Isaiah lxvi. 23.<sup>4</sup> St. Mark xv. 43.<sup>5</sup> St. Luke ii. 29, 30.

free from Roman domination; but the anticipation of change—change connected with some great person who was to appear, change which should extend the ‘kingdom of God’ beyond all former limits—was a possession of the Jewish people when Jesus Christ was born.

Hence, when the Lord preached Himself, or commissioned His disciples to preach, *the kingdom of Heaven is at hand*,<sup>1</sup> or when He said, *the kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed*,<sup>2</sup> or *the kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven*,<sup>3</sup> or *the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea*,<sup>4</sup> and the like, He was appealing to an idea which already existed abundantly, though in an undeveloped state, in the minds of the people to whom He spoke. In other words, the Lord did not introduce for the first time the conception of a Church, even of a Catholic Church. He laid hold upon a thought which had been already growing for centuries, and which had been developed, so far as it was developed, by long discipline and painful experience, by religious ordinances and prophetic teaching, and which in His hands was to acquire a new life of almost miraculous power.

These remarks are not necessary to prove that the Lord Jesus regarded the founding of a Church as one of the chief ends of His life and ministry; this fact is obvious from merely reading the Gospel records. But the remarks which have been made may possibly be valuable, as illustrating the manner in which the Lord introduced and explained His purpose, and as helping us to understand the apparent ease with which the purpose was apprehended and embraced. In modern times there has been much to influence men’s minds against the acceptance of the idea of the founding of a Church as the great work of Christ: thoughts of spiritual domination, sometimes of worldly ambition and influence, are apt to connect themselves with the name of Church. But from the beginning it was not so: it is the folly and sin of man which have thrown a dark shadow upon a Divine institution. For the purpose of understanding the Apostles’ Creed we must rid ourselves of all

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. iv. 17.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xiii. 33.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xiii. 31.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xiii. 47.



unworthy thoughts, and contemplate the Church which Christ came to found, not as Satan pictured it in the temptation in the wilderness, a kingdom for which homage should be done to the evil one, but as He contemplated it Himself, or as His Apostles spoke of it. Thus the Lord says in well-known words—words which for the point now in hand are equally good, whatever be the special interpretation put upon the word *rock*—*Upon this rock will I build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*<sup>1</sup> So St. Paul speaks of the *Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.*<sup>2</sup> And in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read of the *Church of the firstborn, which are written in Heaven.*<sup>3</sup> Again, we read of the *Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*<sup>4</sup> So also, when speaking of the *fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ,*<sup>5</sup> St. Paul adds these striking words, *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God:* language which seems to place the creation of the Church upon the same level, as an exhibition of Divine wisdom and power, with the creation of the universe. Once more, the husband is said to be *the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church.*<sup>6</sup> Passages of a more or less similar character abound in the New Testament. So that while it may be possible to describe the mission of the Lord Jesus in other ways—doubtless it is quite possible—it is not possible to deny, in the face of such language as has been quoted, that the foundation of a Church is a more or less adequate description of the work which that mission was intended to effect.

Before passing away from the consideration of the purpose of the Lord Jesus in connection with the founding of a Church, it should be noted as undeniable, that He cherished a conception of that Church in its maturity far exceeding anything which had entered into any human mind before. Perhaps as grand a conception as any that had been hitherto put forward is that contained in those words of Isaiah which have been already

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xvi. 18.<sup>2</sup> Acts xx. 28.<sup>3</sup> Heb. xii. 23.<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 15.<sup>5</sup> Ephes. iii. 9.<sup>6</sup> Eph. v. 23.



quoted, and in which the Prophet speaks of that which shall happen in the last days. We have the picture of Jerusalem as the spiritual centre of the world, its unique character recognised, and the nations making pilgrimage to visit the Temple and to worship in its courts:—a very grand conception. But the conception of Jesus Christ is grander still, and is to be gathered from His parting command, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*<sup>1</sup> The Church, so to speak, is to be brought to all nations; not all nations brought to the Church. All the material obstacles and difficulties and practical impossibilities, involved in the thought of making *Jerusalem which now is*<sup>2</sup> the religious heart and centre of the world, are annihilated by the great missionary precept given to the Apostles. Certainly—we may say with all reverence—if a truly Catholic Church was to be founded, this was the way to found it. The Lord first prepared the message, which was to be published to the world, by His own Nativity and Cross and Passion and by His glorious Resurrection and Ascension; and then He sent His chosen Apostles, with a command to go throughout all the world in order to publish that message to mankind without exception.

Thus much for the founding of the Church as conceived in the Lord's purpose. Next let us observe how the purpose was carried into effect.

The carrying into effect of the purpose of Christ is to be seen, in its earliest form, in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. The name of the book is significant—*the Acts of the Apostles*—the doings of certain men who were sent to do something. What did they do?

They formed themselves into a society: we have the very number of which it at first consisted, at least approximately—*about an hundred and twenty.*<sup>3</sup> In this society there was an organisation; it was not one of absolute equality: the Apostles stood as a class, a recognised nobility, an aristocracy, by themselves. This is made evident by the fact, that the first public step taken by the society was to fill the place in the Apostolic

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark xvi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Acts i. 15.

College, left vacant by the treason of Judas Iscariot. The chief, or only essential, condition of candidature seems to have been the capability of bearing personal testimony to the truth of the Lord's resurrection. The condition was satisfied by more than one; and at last by a process, first of selection, and then of lot, Matthias was chosen, and recognised as one of the twelve Apostles.

This small body, assembled in a chamber in Jerusalem, was the infant Church. It manifestly understood from the first, that its business and the very law of its being were to increase and grow. The parables of the mustard seed, of the leaven, of the net cast into the sea, would doubtless come very vividly before the minds of the Apostles in connection with the work entrusted to them. And so, when St. Peter had preached his great Pentecostal sermon, it is reported that there were *added unto them the same day about three thousand souls*.<sup>1</sup> These three thousand souls were not merely persons convinced of certain truths, such as these, that Jesus Christ had been crucified unjustly, that the nation had committed a great sin in killing Him, or that He was not now dead, having risen again from the grave; they were, no doubt, convinced of all this; but they were also admitted by a certain rite, namely, that of baptism, into the society which Jesus Christ had founded. They were *added* to the Christian body, the Christian Church.

It will be observed that no definition of the word Church occurs in the Acts of the Apostles. The word is constantly used, and evidently means the society which the Apostles formed around them, in accordance with the directions which they had received from their Master. He had spoken in the days of His flesh of building a Church, and now the Church was being built. Like the Temple of Solomon, there was no sound of axe or hammer; but living stones, sometimes one by one, or two or three at a time, sometimes in multitudes, were daily fitted into their places, and so the building rose. Let it be observed that this form of Apostolic work dates from the departure of the Lord from His Apostles: while He was yet

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 41.

with them they announced that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand, they baptized those who desired baptism, their work is described as *preaching the Gospel*;<sup>1</sup> but the gathering together of a body, which should be separated from all persons round about them, by the one great distinctive difference of faith in Christ—a body having its own organisation and its own ordinances—this work did not commence until the Lord had finally left the world; and from that time all other Apostolic work was subservient to this. The Apostles preached and exhorted and protested against idolatry, sometimes performed works of healing, sometimes performed other wonderful works; but all was subordinate to the one great purpose of planting wherever they went new branches of Christ's Church.

It may be observed, that this view of the leading idea of the book of the Acts of the Apostles may help to explain why it should have been left in so fragmentary a condition, or, at all events, to explain how in that fragmentary condition it is adequate to fulfil the purpose which it may be supposed to have been intended to effect. For, in truth, regarded as a book of history it is manifestly imperfect: it has no distinct limitation of area: the narrative first follows one Apostle and then another, restricting itself to no particular country, and violating all rules upon which ordinary histories are written; and then it terminates abruptly, with apparently no reason why the end should come at that moment rather than at any other. It may be difficult or impossible to explain all this; but if the intention of the book be to declare what the leading idea of the Apostles was, and how they endeavoured to realise that idea, we shall perhaps come to the conclusion that no form of book could be more effective than that which St. Luke has adopted. The planting of the Church of Christ *is* just the irregular thing, which the irregularity of St. Luke's history represents it to be: sometimes one agent comes to the front, sometimes another: sometimes there is an opening here, sometimes an opening there: and however far we continue and wherever we stop, we have a necessarily imperfect work. The history gives

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke ix. 6.

us only the beginning of the growth of the great tree, which was intended one day to overshadow the earth.

On the whole it may be maintained, that the book of the Acts of the Apostles, from beginning to end, demonstrates the fact, that the Apostles and other first followers of Jesus Christ regarded the foundation of a society, or Church, as the main work which they were appointed to do; and it shews also how they attempted to do it.

Before leaving the book of the Acts of the Apostles one or two points should be especially noted.

According to the Authorised Version the first occasion upon which the word Church occurs is to be found in chapter ii. 47, where we read that *the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*. But according to the text used in the Revised Version, the word does not occur; and it would be unwise to lay stress upon a doubtful reading. Passing by this case, therefore, we find the first occurrence of the term in chapter v. 2, where we read that *great fear came upon all the Church*; and subsequently in chapter viii. 3, it is recorded that *Saul made havoc of the Church*. It is interesting to observe how naturally the word *Church* came into Christian nomenclature; there is evidently nothing controversial in its use, any more than there was in the case of St. Stephen, who in his speech before his martyrdom speaks of *the Church in the wilderness*,<sup>1</sup> the fact being that the term might be in both instances translated by such a word as *congregation*—merely implying a body, or assembly, or society, held together by some common belief or worship or principle. It may be remarked, and it is well that it should be remembered, that the word Ἐκκλησία or *Church* has originally no religious meaning; a civil assembly had as much right to the title as a religious; and in fact, in Acts xix. 41, where we read that the town clerk of Ephesus *dismissed the assembly*, the very word is used.

It should be noted, further, that whereas in the earliest days, while the Christian body was almost confined to its cradle, Jerusalem, the word Church was taken without explanation to

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 38.



designate that body, there was very soon an application, apparently quite natural and (as it were) spontaneous, of the word to different local portions or limbs of the body. Thus we read of *the Church which was in Jerusalem*<sup>1</sup> and of *the Church that was at Antioch*; <sup>2</sup> and so of other local churches; while, nevertheless, the general title of *the Church* continues to mean the whole Christian body, comprising all disciples wherever they may have been. The double use of the term is closely analogous to that of the word *army* amongst ourselves. When we speak of 'the army,' in general terms, or of a young man 'joining the army,' or of the 'British army being in a condition of efficiency,' we mean the whole body of Her Majesty's soldiers, wherever they may be, regarded as constituting one organised body; but this does not prevent us from speaking of the 'army in India,' or of the expediency of 'sending an army' to this place or that. No confusion arises in the case of the word *Army*: there need be none in the case of the word *Church*.

There is another use of the word Church in the book of the Acts of the Apostles which deserves notice.

In chapter xv. we have the deeply interesting record of the Council held in Jerusalem under the presidency of St. James, for the purpose of settling certain difficult points of doctrine and practice. I need not dwell upon the manner in which the Council was constituted, or the principles upon which it acted: for the present purpose it is sufficient to observe, that the Council assumed that it had authority to decide controverted points, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and that, in recording its pronouncement, the name *Church* occurs. *Then pleased it the Apostles and elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch.*<sup>3</sup> Let it be observed that this gathering of *the Apostles and elders* was at Jerusalem, and that it met to consider difficulties which had arisen at Antioch; that it discussed those difficulties, and then gave a solemn sentence supported by these strong words, *it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.*<sup>4</sup> Putting all these points

<sup>1</sup> Acts xi. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xv. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xv. 28.



together, it seems impossible to deny that in the primitive condition of things there was a recognised power of regulating the Church at large—for if Antioch could appeal to the Apostles and elders in its difficulties, why not other places?—and that this power was regarded as being vested in the *Apostles and elders with the whole Church*. This exhibits the Church in primitive times, not as a mere assembly, or as a multitude of scattered assemblies, meeting for worship and mutual edification, but as a body having power of legislation or regulation for the spiritual good of all.

Perhaps, however, the most solemn and transcendent reference to the Church in the Acts of the Apostles is to be found in the words of St. Paul to the elders of Ephesus, in which he charges them *to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood*.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now pass on to notice the manner in which the word Church is used in the Apostolic Epistles.

Nine of St. Paul's Epistles are addressed to particular churches, namely, the churches in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and Thessalonica; that is, to the congregations of disciples in those places. Consequently, we are not surprised to find such expressions as *the Church which is at Cenchrea*<sup>2</sup> and *the Church of God which is at Corinth*,<sup>3</sup> in like manner as we have already found the *Church at Jerusalem* and the *Church at Antioch* in the Acts of the Apostles. Sometimes the word corresponds as nearly as may be to the Church at large as distinguished from the unbelieving world outside; as when St. Paul writes, *Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God*:<sup>4</sup> all, that was not Jew or Gentile, thus belonging to the Church. On the other hand, the phrase is limited even to a single family; as in the expression, *Priscilla and Aquila and the Church which is in their house*; <sup>5</sup> and again, *Philemon our dearly beloved and the Church in thy house*.<sup>6</sup> But as the phrase is thus sometimes reduced to a minimum of extent, so on the other hand St. Paul sometimes stretches it so as not merely to comprehend all local bodies of

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xvi. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 2.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. x. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. xvi. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Philem. 1, 2.

disciples, regarded as constituting together one general complete body, or, as we should say, one Catholic Church, but (passing the limits of this comprehensive conception) to signify the ideal body which consists of all holy persons, all saints, from the beginning to the end of time. Thus he says of Christ that He *loved the Church and gave Himself for it*,<sup>1</sup> and that He has presented to *Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*.<sup>2</sup> Again, he uses the phrase, *His body's sake, which is the Church*.<sup>3</sup> And so likewise the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes: *Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect*.<sup>4</sup>

This examination of the scriptural use of the word Church may conclude with a reference to the book of Revelation. The value of this reference consists in two points very different from each other.

First, we have a record of seven Churches, in the local sense of the word: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. And we perceive that each of these Churches had its own *angel*, or president, or (as we should say) bishop; that each had its own peculiar faults and trials and difficulties, as well as qualities worthy of commendation; for the letters addressed to the *angels of the seven Churches* may be assumed to throw light upon the condition of the Churches themselves. Hence the reference to local Churches in the book of Revelation is valuable, both as enforcing what we find in the Epistles, and also as carrying the history down to a later date.

But, secondly, the book of Revelation contains matter which illustrates the meaning of the phrase *Church* more clearly than the Epistles to the seven Churches of Asia can do, because it lifts (as it were) the curtain between Heaven and Earth, and enables us to get a vision of the Church according to the idea. There is much which helps towards that vision, while at the same time it must be confessed that there is much through

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 25.<sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 27.<sup>3</sup> Col. i. 24.<sup>4</sup> Heb. xii. 22, 23.

which it is difficult to be sure that we see distinctly; but certainly all seems intended to represent to our imaginations a future of glory and spiritual perfection, towards which the present dispensation is progressing. The general conception is that of affliction terminating in glory, of imperfection tending towards perfection, of treading down Satan under foot, and of the final establishment of the kingdom of God. One passage may be chosen as illustrating more clearly than almost any other the idea of the Church according to the book of Revelation, though the word Church does not actually occur. It is part of the passage appropriately chosen as the Epistle for All Saints' Day.

*I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and about the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*<sup>1</sup>

Even this magnificent picture must be imperfect; but the general effect produced is that of the Church of the Jews, and of all previous dispensations, leading up to, and being merged in, a great universal Church of all nations and languages, unlimited in space and time; having its foundations upon earth, but reaching up to Heaven; blended with a Church of higher intelligences; able to join in worship, not merely in imagination but in reality, with angels and archangels, and with the whole company of Heaven.

Now let us examine for a moment, still holding to the historical view of the subject, how the conception of the Church, which is to be found in Holy Scripture, has been worked out in subsequent history. It will be observed that

<sup>1</sup> Rev. vii. 9-12.

reference has been made to the books of the New Testament, not so much because they are what is called Holy Scripture, as because they are the earliest historical records of the Christian Church. This character we have obviously a right to claim for them: no one can refuse to allow it: the claim involves no disputed question of inspiration, of authorship, or of any other kind. The books have undeniably been the property of Christians from the earliest ages: hence, while on theological and other grounds it will be possible to raise questions and import doubts to the end of time, the wildest scepticism cannot fail to assign to them an historical validity abundantly sufficient for our present purpose. The point then, with which we shall now be concerned, is the history of the Church after its immediate founders had passed away. Of what kind was it? The question cannot be answered with unbounded satisfaction: there are many things to cause grief from the Christian point of view. The enemy came by night, and sowed tares among the wheat. Nevertheless, the Church had a history, and in many respects a very noble one: tremendous battles fought, persecutions proved to be ineffectual, an exhibition of brotherly love and other cognate qualities, which had never been seen in the world before, or at least never in such brightness; heroes of the first magnitude; and above all, faith in God, faith in Christ, faith exhibited by Christians in themselves and in the goodness of their cause, such as was sure sooner or later to overcome the world. Moreover, the Church was conscious that she had a history, and soon she produced apologists and historians. She knew that she was a corporate body; and if sometimes she was tempted too much to imitate the forms and organisation of the Empire, still the mere fact of imitation showed the consciousness of the possession of a corporate life, and her very faults and failings indicated what she ought to be in order to realise the Divine idea.

All which goes to prove, that when in early times a postulant for baptism said, 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,' he knew perfectly well what he meant. People might hate the Church, or dislike it and persecute it, or despise it and leave it alone, but every one knew what it was; and the postulant, who



said that he believed in it, meant that he wished to cast in his own lot with its members, to partake of their privileges, and to share their persecutions. What changes time has produced with regard to this matter may require remark hereafter; but so far as the primitive age is concerned, this article of the Creed would be as clear as the sun in the heavens.

It may be asked, if this be the historical view, what room is there for faith? Before proceeding to answer this question, let a word be said upon the epithets, 'Holy, Catholic.'

The Nicene Creed has the fuller expression, 'One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.' Upon which it may be observed, that so far as the word *one* is concerned, the Nicene form is not really more definite than that of the Apostles' Creed. For the definite article *the* implies *one*, and no more. If we can speak of *The* Church, we must of necessity mean *One* Church; and undoubtedly in primitive times a catechumen would be taught that there was one and one only. How could they who remembered the Lord's mysterious and touching petition, *that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us*,<sup>1</sup> imagine the possibility of more than *one* Church?

The epithet *Holy* would probably in early times, and should perhaps now, be taken in no very precise sense, but rather as a general expression of reverence: as we speak of the Holy Land, the Holy City, the Holy Places, the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Sacrament. It would indicate the character which each member of the Church should strive to attain, those members being, in the language of St. Paul, *called to be saints*;<sup>2</sup> but it would not imply any special theological view concerning the spiritual and moral qualities of the Church in general, or of the members of the same in particular. If the Church deserved to be cited in the list of things to be believed in, it would certainly deserve the epithet of *Holy*.

And the word *Catholic* would not in primitive times, as unfortunately it too often does now, call up thoughts of all kinds of heart-burnings and divisions and parties. It would simply

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 7.



express the blessed fact, that the Gospel was to be preached to every creature, and that all were invited to enter the ark of Christ's Church. Moreover, the labours of the Apostles, the grand view taken by them of their commission, the planting of churches here, there, and everywhere, made it clear that the foundations of a Catholic or universal Church were being laid; and, though not actually comprising all mankind at present, still the Church, even in primitive times, deserved the name of Catholic, and catechumens would know without any strong effort of faith what the name might fairly be taken to mean.

All which being so, we return to the question, What need for faith in respect of such an article as this?

The answer would seem to shape itself into such remarks as the following:

(1) Belief in the Holy Catholic Church is not merely the recognition of a fact, but the acknowledgment of a principle.<sup>1</sup> The Church, in the idea, is a corporate body possessing special powers conferred by the Holy Ghost. Those powers may have been misused, may have been made sometimes a curse and not a blessing, or (to take another view) may be partially in abeyance in consequence of misuse; or, again, certain branches of the Church may have caricatured the truth, by claiming for a part what belongs to the whole, and so may have brought suspicion upon genuine corporate Church life and action; but the most unfavourable supposition that can be made, need not evacuate belief in the Holy Catholic Church of Christ of all spiritual and living meaning. Even if the facts of history should prove that the promises of God have to a great extent failed through human weakness and perversity—and this would not be a solitary instance of such failure—still, it would be something,

<sup>1</sup> With regard to the phrase, 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,' see what is said in the note upon p. 301. It will be observed that when the substantive *belief*, and not the verb *believe*, is used, some connecting preposition is necessary. Nevertheless it should not be forgotten that there is a clear distinction between belief *in* the Holy Ghost and belief *in* the Holy Catholic Church. Dr. Heurtley suggests that the phrase *in Spiritu Sancto*, instead of *in Spiritum Sanctum*, which occurs in some Latin creeds, may have been adopted in order to mark the distinction.

may, very much, to believe in those promises as real, and to pick up the fragments of their fulfilment *that nothing be lost*,<sup>1</sup> and to hope and trust that the failure (if failure there be) is only temporary, and will be followed by some glorious fulfilment. No doubt the clouds are heavy and dark upon the future of Christendom; but are there not rifts in the clouds?

(2) This consideration leads to another, which is of the highest importance. One of the grandest and most far-stretching utterances of the Lord Jesus Christ, was that which He made concerning His Church. The words have been already quoted, but they must be quoted again, with the remark that no controversy concerning the particulars of the promise can destroy the force of the promise itself. *On this rock, saith Christ, I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*<sup>2</sup> Which words, if they mean anything, would seem to mean as much as this, that to have no faith in the Church of Christ is to have no faith in Christ Himself. It may be that the interpretation of the promise must to a certain extent be determined by the course of events, or that the possibility of its fulfilment may be limited in some respects by human conditions; but no interpretation or lawful limitation whatever, would seem to justify the supposition, that the Church which Christ founded can be utterly destroyed. Should hell prevail, the declaration of the Lord would be frustrated—a horrible and impossible supposition for any one who has already said, ‘I believe in Jesus Christ.’ Therefore, with regard to the life and continuance of the Church, which no reasoning or historical inference can insure, the disciple of Christ must *believe*.

(3) There is one more consideration—and a very practical one—which belongs to the department of faith. No mere historical knowledge of what the Church is, or of what the Church has done, can be a sufficient foundation for the wish and determination to become, or, having become to continue, a member of the Church, or a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. ‘I believe in the Holy Catholic Church’ means, in the

<sup>1</sup> St. John vi. 12.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xvi. 18.

mouth of a catechumen, 'I believe that I ought by baptism to seek entrance into that Church, and to remain a member of it to my life's end.' If we regard the Apostles' Creed as the baptismal symbol, which is a right way of regarding it, we shall perceive that this must of necessity be the true interpretation of the article under discussion. There is nothing controversial in it, except so far as there is ever a controversy between Christ and Satan, between the Church and the world. We hear, no doubt, in modern days of persons regarding themselves as Christians and yet disclaiming adhesion to any particular body, disliking the word *Church* except as it is synonymous with *sect*, and utterly eschewing the notion of such a body as that which is described by the name of Catholic. But this view of the matter argues a misapprehension of the whole subject; and what is here urged is this, that, in the intention of the framers of the Apostles' Creed, one purpose of the article of belief in the Church was the assertion of the duty of joining the universal body, which Jesus Christ founded to be a witness to Himself and the means of salvation to mankind.

Some further light will perhaps be thrown upon this view of the first section of the article, when we have discussed the second, to which we now proceed.

## 2. *The Communion of Saints.*<sup>1</sup>

The form appointed to be used by all preachers before their sermons—the 'Bidding Prayer,' as it is called—which is enjoined by the 55th Canon of 1603, and which is still used with variations (apparently arbitrary) in the University churches and elsewhere, exhibits the following commencement:

'Ye shall pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church, that is, for the whole congregation of Christian people, dispersed throughout the whole world.'

The interpretation here given to the phrase *Holy Catholic Church* seems very much to correspond to the words, *the Communion of Saints*, in the Apostles' Creed. The latter clause of

<sup>1</sup> This phrase is one of the latest additions to the Western Creed, and is not found in any of the Eastern forms.

the article now under consideration, is all the more noticeable because there is nothing corresponding to it in the Nicene symbol. In this the words are 'one Catholic and Apostolic Church,' which might seem to have the effect of giving emphasis to the unity of the Church at the expense of its universality. It is not urged that this was the intention; but certainly, if any person should be disposed to argue that a particular body of persons, professing to be disciples of Christ, were not members of the Church, in consequence of some flaw in their title-deeds or some defect in their faith or practice, he would find it more easy to support his contention by reference to the Nicene Creed than to the Apostles'. We see, in fact, this tendency to contract the Church within limits, narrower than those which it may be believed that God approves, in the uncharitable and unjustifiable language of the Creed of Pope Pius IV.; in which, after acknowledging all the decrees of the Council of Trent, recognising the Church of Rome as the mother and mistress of all Churches, and the Bishop of Rome as the successor of St. Peter and the Vicar of Christ, the person rehearsing the Creed is taught to say, *Hanc veram catholicam fidem, extra quam nemo salvus esse potest, quam in præsentī sponte profiteor et veraciter teneo, . . . retinere et confiteri . . . voveo ac juro.*

In language of this kind it is impossible to find anything better than the intolerant assertion of a claim, the validity of which all history denies; but if, without adopting such extravagant pretensions on behalf of any branch of the Church Catholic, we nevertheless feel disposed to unduly narrow our view of the extent of ground which the Church of Christ occupies, we may find a valuable corrective in the explanatory clause supplied by the Apostles' Creed. For that clause seems to assert, that the Church of Christ, taken in its broadest sense, is the whole communion or company of faithful disciples. A 'saint' and a 'faithful disciple' may be taken to mean the same thing, for all disciples are, according to apostolic language already quoted, *called to be saints*. No one should desire to contract the meaning of the Church within narrower limits than those which are here indicated. If it be asked, Is then one



Church no better than another? Are all sects on the same footing? Is it a matter of indifference, for example, whether in England a man is in communion with the ancient historical Church of the land, or is a member of a sect, or professes to be a Christian altogether unattached? the answer must be, that these things are not matters of indifference, that it would be foolish so to regard them. Moreover, it is impossible to deny, that the immense subdivision of Christians into churches and sects and bodies can scarcely be regarded as corresponding to the idea of unity which Jesus Christ our Lord held up, or for the realisation of which He condescended to pray. *That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, when we regard the world, not as we should wish it to be, but as it is, we may fairly make a division between those who call Jesus Christ Lord and those who do not; this is a clear and distinct line of division; and for certain good and intelligible purposes, those who are on the one side of the line may be said to constitute 'the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints,' and those who are on the other side of the line not to constitute any part of that Church. Belief in the Holy Catholic Church, thus understood, may be a matter of highest importance, as recognising the total result of the work of Christ hitherto, as defining the field of operation of the Holy Spirit at the present time; while it may be equally a matter of importance, for some purposes, to recognise the distinction between one constituent part of the Church and another. An illustration may be found by reference to civil matters. Great Britain may be described as one country, under one crown, having one Parliament, one set of laws, and so forth. Nothing can be more complete than this unity. Nevertheless, regarded from another point of view all unity vanishes. Great Britain consists of the Kingdom of England, the Kingdom of Scotland, and the Principality of Wales. Each of these, again, is divided into counties, having separate local governments, and to some extent manners and customs of their own. Besides

<sup>1</sup> St. John. xvii. 21.



which there are scores of islands, which in one sense are a part of Great Britain, and in another sense are no part of it at all. Then again there are several languages spoken in Great Britain, to say nothing of brogues and dialects which make the inhabitants of one part of the island scarcely intelligible to those of another. How easy it would be to draw a picture of Great Britain as so hopelessly divided up into incongruous and discordant parts, that to talk of unity would be absurd! Nevertheless, when you get to the right point of view, how completely the picture of discord vanishes, leaving another and a better one, namely, that of a happy, compact, and powerful island, which, by its unity and steadiness, rules not only the waves, but also a considerable fraction of the land and the wealth and the population of the world! All illustrations are defective in some point or another, and probably it would be easy to find defects in that which has now been given; but certainly it seems valid for the purpose for which it is adduced, namely, that of indicating that the Church of Christ, dispersed throughout the whole world, may, on the one hand, be regarded as painfully and hopelessly divided, and, on the other, be still truly described as, 'One Catholic and Apostolic Church.'

There is another feature of the Holy Catholic Church which is brought into prominence by the phrase, 'The Communion of Saints.'

The complete conception of the Catholic Church is not limited by the horizon of this world. Those, whom we emphatically describe as *saints*, are they who have passed away from the troubles and trials of this present world, and are in joy and felicity. We speak of *Saint Peter*, *Saint Paul*, *Saint John*, and so forth. There are even some notable men of more recent times, of whom, notwithstanding the obvious danger involved in the process of allotting the title, members of the English Church, to say nothing of others, by common consent speak as saints; as for examples, *Saint Augustine*, *Saint Jerome*, *Saint Chrysostom*, *Saint Cuthbert*, *Saint Aidan*, *Saint Kentigern*. But however many saints we admit into the calendar, and even if we concede the propriety of the principle adopted by the Roman Church, of making additions from time to time by

formal process and judgment declared, still the list of titular saints must in the nature of things be comparatively small. Whereas the true conception of saints, as it is brought before our minds on All Saints' Day, is that of a *great multitude, which no man can number*,<sup>1</sup> all bowing down with one mind before the throne of God, and worshipping the Lamb. It is when we fix our eyes in imagination upon this glorious picture of the redeemed in Heaven, and regard at the same time those on earth who are striving against sin and infirmity, and looking forward in hope to the time when they also shall join the blessed heavenly company, that we rise to the full conception of the Holy Catholic Church of Christ. *Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy glory!*

There is even one step further which we may go; at all events, the step may be taken without danger and with some advantage. We may venture to include in the conception of the Church those creatures of higher rank than ourselves, who are represented as, in company with the spirits of just men made perfect, joining in the eternal worship of Heaven. This enlarged picture of the Church, if we may be permitted so to describe it, is brought before us in a very exquisite manner by that magnificent hymn, *Te Deum laudamus*, a few words of which form the close of the last paragraph.

*To Thee all angels cry aloud: the Heavens, and all the powers therein.*

*To Thee Cherubin, and Seraphin: continually do cry,  
Holy, Holy, Holy: Lord God of Sabaoth;*

*Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty: of Thy Glory.*

*The glorious company of the Apostles: praise Thee.*

*The goodly fellowship of the Prophets: praise Thee.*

*The noble army of Martyrs: praise Thee.*

*The Holy Church throughout all the world: doth acknowledge  
Thee.*

This language seems to indicate the highest and truest method of regarding the Church: the noblest view of the Church lends itself to a hymn of praise, rather than to a catalogue of credenda.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. vii. 9.

Not that either the Apostles' Creed, or the Nicene, can properly be described as a mere catalogue of credenda: both of them may be regarded as hymns, and especially the latter, as having exercised the highest musical genius in wedding it to sound; while that which is commonly called 'The Athanasian Creed' may clearly be described as a hymn or musical composition. Nevertheless, the manner in which the description of the Church comes out in the hymn, *Te Deum laudamus*, strikes the imagination perhaps more than in either of the Creeds: we do not profess to believe, but we declare that which in the height of our devotion we see; there the Church *is*, in living action; throughout all the world acknowledging 'the Father of an Infinite Majesty, Thine honourable, true, and only Son, also the Holy Ghost the Comforter.'

It will be observed that the line between the Church on earth and the inhabitants of Heaven, is not entirely obliterated by the language of the *Te Deum*. What it represents is rather a graduated ascent from the lowest to the highest, the lowest being the Holy Church throughout all the world, the highest consisting of creatures altogether removed in nature from ourselves, described as Angels and Powers, Cherubin and Seraphin. There is a continuity of life and being, reaching up and connecting by a Divine chain the two extremities of the spiritual creation of God. In the decoration of churches, sculptors and painters have sometimes happily availed themselves of this magnificent conception.

It will be easily seen, that, if what has been here submitted concerning 'the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints,' be a fair representation of what is meant by this article of the Creed, the acceptance of the article must belong to the region of faith. It is not a case for the application of the maxim, *Credo quia impossibile*: there is nothing, in the ordinary sense of the term, *miraculous* in the existence of the Church; there is, in fact, as has been shewn, a strong and distinct historical element, upon which, so far as much of the article is concerned, the belief of men may rest. But there is a large department, for which no historical basis can in the nature of things be claimed. To believe in the Holy Catholic

Church is not merely to believe that a society was founded by Jesus Christ, that this society has existed ever since, and that it exists still—not merely this, but to believe that the society has an undying life, that it has superhuman principles, that it is animated by the Holy Ghost, that it must spread and conquer the world, that it is bound by spiritual ties to an unseen living society which is in the immediate presence of God. We believe all this, because it seems to be distinctly taught as true by the Lord and His Apostles: we believe that Christ has founded His Church upon a rock, because He has said so: we believe that the gates of hell will not prevail against it upon the same infallible authority.

## CHAPTER XI

### ARTICLE X

#### THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

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*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me—ACTS xxvi. 18*



ENGLAND.

FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

1. *I bileve in God Fadre Alle mygty,  
Shapere of hevene and of erthe ;*
2. *And in Jhesu Crist, his oonlepye sone,  
Oure Lord oon ;*
3. *Which was conceyved of the Holy Goost ;  
Borne of the mayden Marye ;*
4. *Suffered undir the Ponce Pilate, crucifyede, and dede,  
and is buriede,*
5. *Cometh down to helles ;  
The thridde day he roos from deethis ;*
6. *Steyed up to hevenes ;  
Sitteth on his Fadre rigte side, God alle mygty,*
7. *And fro thence he is to come for to decme the qwyke  
and dede.*
8. *I bileve in the Holy Spirit ;*
9. *Holy chirche ;  
Comunyng of seyntes ;*
10. *Forgevenesse of synnes ;*
11. *Risying of flesshe*
12. *Unto ay lastyngge lif. So mote it be. Amen.*

## CHAPTER XI.

## ARTICLE X.

## THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. (R., F.)

THE corresponding article in the Nicene Creed runs thus: *I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.* By this form we are brought face to face with one of the great sacraments of the Church; and the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins becomes apparently identified with the doctrine of that sacrament of which it was said to Saul, who became the Apostle Paul, *And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*<sup>1</sup> So that the Nicene version would seem to relegate the article entirely to the region of faith. And no doubt it is to that region that the article mainly belongs: nevertheless, I have ventured to mark it with the symbol R. as well as F. I have done this not without hesitation; but it seems so very desirable to make the foundations of the Christian Creed as broad as possible, that whenever an article is of such a kind that it can be plausibly regarded as gaining support from the collateral aid of history or reason, or both, I have thought it wise to suggest to the reader the possibility of this compound foundation. In the present case it may be argued, that although the forgiveness of sins be essentially a doctrine which can only be known through Divine revelation, and although the development and enforcement of the doctrine may be properly described as the main purpose of the New Testament and of the ministrations of Christ's Church, still there is something left for the reason of man to do in securing its complete reception.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxii. 16.

1. For what is sin? *Sin*, says St. John, *is the transgression of the law*;<sup>1</sup> and it would be difficult to give a neater and clearer definition. The Revised Version gives the rendering *Sin is lawlessness*, which is in one sense a better translation, as giving one English word to represent the one Greek word of the original; but perhaps it does not convey St. John's meaning to the English reader more truly than the periphrastic rendering of the Authorised Version. There is much in the writings of St. Paul, especially in the Epistle to the Romans, which tends to enforce and explain the definition of sin given by St. John. It will be observed that abstract definitions, and arguments concerning the nature of sin, occur in the later, not the earlier pages of Holy Scripture. Definitions and arguments would not have been intelligible in the beginning of things; and therefore the great lessons concerning sin are first introduced in Scripture by pictures of what has taken place, not by abstract reasoning. As geometry began (so the word itself testifies) with the measurement of land, and only rose after mankind had gone through a long education to definitions of space and abstract propositions, so religion and morals began not with principles and definitions, but with practice and with action. Of the manner in which the doctrine of sin was thus developed in Holy Scripture more will be said hereafter; but at present my desire is to exhibit the subject from the abstract point of view suggested by St. John's definition, which may be regarded as a proper subject for rational discussion.

If we regard sin as *lawlessness* or as *the transgression of the law*, the first consideration which arises is that which concerns the nature of the law imposed, and the person imposing it. We have already committed ourselves to belief in *God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth*, and the question of God's being and of His creative power needs not therefore to be reopened now; but when we come to consider this Almighty Maker in relation to His intelligent creatures, we cannot avoid considerations which go beyond the relation of a maker to the things which he has made. In other words, there is an essential

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 4.

immeasurable difference between the relation in which a planet, regarded as a revolving ball of matter, stands to God, and that in which a man stands to Him. A human creature cannot be considered apart from his sovereign endowment of an independent will: this it is, above all other things, which constitutes his humanity: he has much in common with the beasts, much in common even with the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, but the one thing which chiefly gives him a claim to superiority over all other creatures, is the power of choice as to what he will do and what he will leave undone. If man was evolved, as we are told that he was, by gradual growth from lower forms, it may be said that humanity was then reached when the power of choice and will was first realised as a possession. I am disposed, as will be seen, to place the independent will even above the gift of reason and of speech: this, however, is a question not material to the present argument.

But if we think of a universe in which there are two independent wills, and if one of these wills be by hypothesis perfectly righteous, then it is manifest that in order that all may be permanently very good there must be some kind of coincidence and concord between the two wills. What must happen if this be not so, it may not be easy to say without reference to experience; but that some evil results will arise scarcely admits of a doubt. Nevertheless, it is impossible to feel sure beforehand that coincidence and concord will be insured; from the nature of the case the action of an independent will cannot be predicated beforehand—if it could, the will would not be independent. Hence the very grandeur of humanity constitutes a source of danger. A material universe might go on revolving and moving for ever, without the smallest chance or possibility of any *lawlessness*; but a universe into which choice and will enter as elements, cannot be insured against accident: a moral collision or explosion may be even confidently anticipated.

It is from such general considerations as these, that it seems possible to gain an *a priori* conception of the nature and character of sin. It might be argued that the highest effort of Divine power would have been the creation of a universe, of

which every part should be constrained to live and move and have its being in harmony with the Divine will: such a creation is certainly conceivable. On the other hand, the danger of free will is obvious. Nevertheless, it may suffice to say, that it seems somewhat rash for creatures of our limited intelligence even to speculate as to what would have taken place if certain conditions suggested by ourselves had been fulfilled, and moreover that it is difficult to conceive anything in nature so grand as an independent will. At all events it is impossible to wonder that volition should constitute creation's crown: lacking this, creation would lack almost everything, for which (if we may venture to use the expression with regard to the acts of God) it would be worth while to undertake creation at all.

In this way, then, we seem to gain a reasonable conception of the foundation on which the fact of sin may rest. But the Creed speaks not of sin, but of the *forgiveness of sins*; and the question therefore arises—Is there, apart from Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Church of Christ, any indication of such a doctrine? The answer must be that there is no complete enunciation of the doctrine, but that we may find many shadowy indications of it. Is not the whole idea of sacrifice very much bound up with the notion of pacifying deities who have been offended, and so procuring forgiveness and favour? Are there not in some of the Oriental religions thoughts of rising by religious exercises into communion with the great Father of all, such as is not possible for the vile, the sinful, the impure? Do not ablutions, such as are religiously practised in some countries, testify to a sense of the need of a spiritual washing, such as is more clearly set forth in Christian baptism? Merely hints, it may be, are such things as these; but the slightest shadow cannot exist without a substance, and it may well be believed, that the spirit of man, seeking rest and finding none, may have evolved shadowy dreams of forgiveness and peace with God, which found their substance in the revelation made to the world through Jesus Christ.

Whatever may be thought of the guesses and anticipations which have been made with regard to the doctrine of sin and its forgiveness, it is quite certain that the human mind receives



such a doctrine with considerable readiness. In this, as in other cases, we are probably assisted—some would say misled—by human analogies. The need felt by parents for laying down rules for the conduct of their children, such rules not being arbitrary enactments but directions given for the benefit of the children themselves; the tendency on the part of the children to go their own way and follow their own devices, permitting any temptation which may be offered by companions or by circumstances, or by their own fancies and appetites, to override their sense of the duty of obedience to their parents; and then the readiness of the parent's heart to overlook the fault or to punish gently, and soon to forgive the offending child—all this everyday experience of the disciplinary relations of parents to children, and of children to parents, may tend to recommend to the belief of mankind suggestions as to analogous relations between the Father of spirits and the spirits of men. This is the thought which is expressed with reference to a somewhat different subject-matter in the Epistle to the Hebrews. *We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?*<sup>1</sup> It may be said that such analogies are misleading: perhaps without care and circumspection they may be. But certainly also it is difficult to believe, that the highest and best relations of which we have experience in human life are not intended to help us to rise to higher things still; and it is surely not unreasonable to believe that the conduct and feelings of fathers on earth are helpful in enabling us to understand the conduct and feelings of Him, whom we describe as *our Father which is in Heaven*.

2. Passing on from the confessedly shadowy and imperfect view of the subject which natural reason may suggest to us, we may consider the manner in which the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins is put before us by Holy Scripture.

Taking a broad view of the matter, it may be said with truth that sin and the forgiveness of the same constitute the subject-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 9.

matter of both those Testaments, which together form the volume which we describe shortly as 'the Bible.' The Bible, though in English a word of singular number, and taken as meaning emphatically *the* book, nevertheless more properly represents the Greek plural, or *the books*, meaning thereby the collection of documents held by the Church as canonical. If we ask what is the tie amongst these documents, which enables us to bind up in one volume and regard as one book materials differing so much in date, authorship, language, subject, composition, and other characteristics, there are several answers. One of them, and perhaps the chief, is that which has been above given: the connecting link amongst the constituent parts of the Bible may be found in the fact, that the subject-matter of the whole is sin and the forgiveness of the same. It is not asserted that this subject is everywhere prominent, or that if we select any one portion without reference to the rest we shall find evidence of what is here stated. Take, for example, the book of Ruth: it seems perhaps at first sight to have nothing to do with the subject: even if it could be made clear that this was so, it need scarcely be said that a single exception would not necessarily be fatal to a general theory: but as a matter of fact, the book quoted does not form an exception, as might be proved were it necessary to do so. In reality, however, what is stated is independent of any particular cases of apparent exception; and the proposition asserted is this, that in a most remarkable manner the fact of human sin, and the dispensations of God for the forgiveness of sin and the reconciliation of sinners, exists underneath and runs through and through the whole volume of Scripture.

It is obvious to remark, that the first great moral event of which there is a record in Holy Scripture is the introduction of sin into the world. Whatever may be the view taken of the opening of the book of Genesis—whether we adopt the extreme opinion on one side, that we have in it a revelation of physical cosmogony, or the other extreme opinion, that there is no real connection between the words of Moses and the facts of science, or whether we seek for some conclusion more reasonable than either of these—we cannot fail to perceive and admit that the

opening of Genesis is but the material portal of entrance to the spiritual interior of the book. The Divine qualities attributed to man as the head and crown of creation, the assertion of man's independent will, his condition of trial under a Divine command, his breach of that command and its consequences — these constitute beyond all possibility of contradiction the chief topics of the early chapters of the Holy Scriptures. If any one feels disposed to think lightly of the manner in which these subjects are treated, or to speak of the tale of the Garden of Eden as a childish fable, which, in the maturity of the world's history, men cannot accept as true, it may be suggested whether it is possible to conceive any narrative which shall place before the minds of men of all classes and kinds and levels of capacity, in a clearer and more intelligible way, the great and terrible fact of the entrance of sin into the world. What was wanted for a Bible was not a philosophical discussion, but a statement which plain men and women and even children might be able to understand. That want was supplied by the story of the Garden of Eden: the story embraces all the important elements of the truth, put together in the plainest and yet most picturesque form. If it were possible to criticise the story, without appearing to assume an attitude towards it which no man who deems it to be the work of the Holy Spirit has a right to assume, it might be spoken of as a marvel of didactic skill: and there it stands from age to age, criticised contemptuously by some, criticised in an exactly opposite manner, but it may be feared not always wisely, by others; and in the midst of unfair and sometimes spiteful treatment from one side, and almost superstitious regard from the opposite, it goes on shining in this dark world as the chief moral light which we possess upon the mystery of the evil which we all feel and acknowledge.

But it is important to notice that the history of the Garden of Eden reveals not only the entry of sin into the world, but in some sense also the forgiveness of sin. The moral drama is by no means complete; for sin ought to be followed by penitence, and penitence by forgiveness. But in the case of Adam and Eve there is no hint of penitence. Perhaps the mental and spiritual effort, involved in repentance after the commission of

sin, is more complicated than we usually imagine. Adam and Eve were morally children, without the knowledge which arises from experience, without previous teaching; and their instinct seems to have led them, not so much to feel sorrow for what they had done, as to throw the blame, as children do, upon some one else. The treatment, which they are represented as having received, may in like manner be compared to that which children would receive from a loving parent. Three points may be noted as connected with this treatment. First, it should be observed that the threat concerning disobedience was not literally carried into effect: the sinners did not die in their sin, as it seemed to be threatened that they would: they were punished, and in a certain sense they may be said to have died, but the sentence was commuted, not enforced. Secondly, there is something very touching in the statement that when Adam and Eve found they were naked *the Lord God did make coats of skins, and clothed them*:<sup>1</sup> an act of pity, not of vengeance. And thirdly, the sin of Adam and Eve was connected with the great promise of the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head: a promise which, in the light of subsequent events, must be regarded as containing a whole volume of theology concerning the forgiveness of sins.

The general design of the early portion of Scripture history is manifestly the setting forth, in a variety of ways, of the growth of that evil plant, which is represented as having been planted in the Garden of Eden. It is not asserted that this is the only design; but undoubtedly it is the principal. Thus we have the murder of Abel introduced immediately after the expulsion: for what reason? Surely in order to illustrate the rapidity with which the evil plant grew. And this view prepares us for that growth of evil which culminated in the Flood, and which led to the remarkable record contained in these words: *God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart*.<sup>2</sup> This is strong language, and

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. vi. 5, 6.



implies very bitter doctrine concerning the evil nature of man, that is, concerning the power of sin. It is all the more striking because it falls in so remarkably with all that history has taught us, and with all that we learn from present experience. As we look over the long tract of time, of which we now have a tolerably complete record, nothing can be more striking than the amount of evil connected with human history: it is painful to observe how predominant the lower qualities of human nature have been: the words of Genesis, *the earth is filled with violence*,<sup>1</sup> seem to express only too accurately the general condition of the earth in all time. Man seems capable of so much that is grand and good, that when we read of him as having been created in the image and likeness of God, and having become a living soul by the inspiration of God's breath, we feel that the description is not overcharged. What are the results? The earth is filled with violence even now, and yet, as compared with what it was in earlier times, it is a very Paradise of God. Hence we seem driven to acknowledge, that the picture of an evil world, as given in the opening of Holy Scripture, is not only very striking, but also very true. It may be added that the Bible is unique in literature with regard to this feature: unfriendly critics sometimes treat the opening of Genesis, as if it were one out of many records of the same kind, and as if the discovery of the Moabitish stone, and of early Assyrian records, and what not, reduced the book of Genesis to the level of an ordinary historical curiosity. But the character and value of a book are to be found not in this part or that, but in the purpose and construction of the whole; and it must be admitted, that so regarded there is no book at all like the book of Genesis: it has a character which belongs to no other book: it may be best described as the history of the introduction, and growth, and consequences of human sin.

Following this line of thought, we may speak of Holy Scripture as the book of the forgiveness of sins. This is the light which shines more and more brightly, till it finds its crowning brightness in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi. 13.



Before we approach this part of our subject, however, let it be observed that the idea of sorrow for sin as leading to forgiveness was one of slow development. It may seem strange that it should be so: the attitude of mind which corresponds to the prayer *forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us*,<sup>1</sup> seems as natural as that which belongs to the allied petition, *give us day by day our daily bread*.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it is no exaggeration to say that the feeling of sorrow for sin is wanting throughout the whole of the early Scripture history. Adam and Eve were apparently not penitent, as has been already observed; neither was Cain; nor the people before the Flood; nor the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. The feeling which is so fully and touchingly developed in the book of Psalms, seems not to have found its way to the surface, even if it existed, in the early history of mankind.

A few verses of the thirty-second Psalm may be quoted as giving a good specimen of the development of the doctrine of sin in what may be called the middle age of the Hebrew Church.

*Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven; and whose sin is covered.*

*Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no sin; and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

*For while I held my tongue; my bones consumed away through my daily complaining.*

*For Thy hand is heavy upon me day and night; and my moisture is like the drought in summer.*

*I will acknowledge my sin unto Thee; and mine unrighteousness have I not hid.*

*I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord: and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.*<sup>3</sup>

The completeness of the whole spiritual operation as here delineated is remarkable. There is (1) a general recognition of the happiness of being freed from sin—not from the mere punishment of sin, but from sin itself: (2) a description of the pain caused by the consciousness of sin unacknowledged and

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xi. 4.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xi. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxxii. 1-5.

therefore unforgiven : (3) the determination to open the heart in confession to Him who can forgive : and (4) the relief arising from a sense of forgiveness. There are abundant illustrations of a similar kind to be found, notably in those seven Psalms which bear the title of penitential. The fact would seem to be, that the explanation of this characteristic of the Psalms is to be sought in the existence of a deeper and more essential characteristic still. The Psalms are emphatically the communing of the human soul with God : this it is which makes the book an eternal possession for mankind.<sup>1</sup> When once the human soul has been brought into the presence of God, a new chapter of spiritual history has commenced from which there is no going back. A man who has once seen Mont Blanc, or Rome, or the Pyramids, can never be as if he had not seen them : his soul has new surroundings, his mind has new springs of thought, he stands upon an elevation which was unknown before. Infinitely more wonderful is the spiritual change produced by the vision of God : to have come into His presence, as

<sup>1</sup> The well-known words of Hooker may be quoted : 'What is there necessary for man to know, which the Psalms are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easy and familiar introduction, a mighty augmentation of all virtue and knowledge in such as are entered before, a strong confirmation to the most perfect among others. Heroical magnanimity, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of Providence over this world, and the promised joys of that world which is to come, all good necessarily to be either known or done or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth. Let there be any grief or disease incident into the soul of man, any wound or sickness named, for which there is not in this treasure-house a present comfortable remedy at all times ready to be found.'—*E. P.*, bk. v. chap. xxxvii. This striking passage may be paralleled by the language of St. Augustine :—

'Quas tibi, Deus meus, voces dedi, cum legerem Psalmos David, cantica fidelia, et sonos pietatis excludentes turgidum spiritum ; rudis in germano amore tuo, catechumenus in villâ cum catechumeno Alypio feriat, matre adhærente nobis muliebri habitu, virili fide, anili securitate, maternâ charitate, christianâ pietate ? Quas tibi voces dabam in psalmis illis, et quomodo in te inflammabar ex eis, et accendebar eos recitare, si possem, toto orbe terrarum, adversum typhum generis humani ? Et tamen toto orbe cantantur, et non est qui se abscondat a calore tuo.'—*Confess.* lib. ix. cap. iv. (vol. i. p. 274). In the introduction to the Psalms, in his Commentary, Bishop Wordsworth enumerates twelve modern German works on the Psalms, and more than twelve English. The subject appears to be inexhaustible.

the human soul does in the Psalms, is to have attained a spiritual elevation which can never again be lost.

This being so, we are not surprised to find in the later books of the Old Testament a further development, or at all events a clearer and more habitual appreciation, of the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. Nothing can be more to the point than the first chapter of the first and the very Prince of the Prophets. The opening of the book of the Prophet Isaiah is a complaint concerning sin. *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.*<sup>1</sup> The same kind of thing might have been said to Adam and Eve, or to the people before the Flood, or to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. The expostulation is in reality addressed to *Judah and Jerusalem*, to what may be called the Church of God in those times; but the principle of the expostulation is one which is applicable to all mankind in all ages, in a greater or less degree: it is a charge of *lawlessness*, or of sin, because *sin is lawlessness*, or *the transgression of the law*. Then comes the remedy; not a merely formal one, not a mere offering of oblations or a keeping of feasts or any outward ceremonial acts, but repentance and amendment. *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*<sup>2</sup> Nothing can be more plain and more readily accepted than this; it appeals to every man's conscience: if a man has sinned against God, this is the way in which he must seek deliverance from the burden of sin.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that throughout the prophetic writings there is abundance of matter to be found, entirely

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah i. 2, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah i. 16-18.

according in principle with what has now been quoted from the Prophet Isaiah. The reader is referred to the writings themselves for the proof; one passage shall, however, be quoted from the book of the Prophet Ezekiel, because it has been signalised as the opening of the Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church of England. *When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.*<sup>1</sup> These words may fairly be taken in connection with the other passages with which they are associated in the Book of Common Prayer; for example, with such words as these: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: but, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*<sup>2</sup> They may also be regarded as receiving a reflected comment from the language of the general Confession to which they form an introduction. 'Almighty and most merciful Father; we have erred, and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us.' Very remarkable language, intended undoubtedly as a kind of summary of the doctrine of sin as exhibited in Holy Scripture, as an appeal to human experience, and as a standard towards which Christians who use the language in their daily devotions should endeavour to rise.

3. The Jewish Church had arrived at an advanced state of knowledge concerning sin and its remission before Jesus Christ came into the world. In addition to the light thrown on the subject by the books of the Law and the Prophets, which were read in the synagogues every Sabbath day, and the oral teaching of those who made the study of the sacred books their profession, there was much teaching in the form of ceremony and sacrifice. The ordinance of sacrifice in the Jewish Church occupied, as is

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xviii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John i. 8, 9.



manifest, a conspicuous place. The true meaning of sacrifice was different from those lower meanings which sometimes were associated with it: the sin offering was not a mere tribute to some higher power, like an offering made to an earthly king; nor a bribe (so to speak) intended to avert some evil threatened by an offended deity; nor a mere feast of joy at the table of the gods, in which men and gods might join; not any of these—though doubtless there was often a tendency to permit the idea of sacrifice to degenerate into something of the kind—but a far higher meaning, belonged to the Israelitish sin offering. Here is a description of it: *Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself. . . . And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: and he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.*<sup>1</sup> Let the reader carefully consider this passage, which contains (as it were) the pith and substance of the Jewish system of sacrifice for sin. It is evidently very solemnly conceived, and has presumably a deep meaning. Is not the meaning to be found in considerations such as the following?

A man has arrived at a true sense of sin and sinfulness. He can say from his heart, *I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.*<sup>2</sup> He feels that there is a deep truth in the original curse upon transgression, *In the day that thou sinnest, thou shalt surely die*, or in those later words, *The soul that sinneth it shall die.*<sup>3</sup> In this condition of penitence the man feels that his life is (as it were) forfeited, that it ought to be forfeited, that he

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xvi. 11, 14-16.<sup>2</sup> Job xlii. 6.<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel xviii. 20.



himself is willing to resign it. But how resign it? Not according to the letter: this is impossible; suicide will not help matters. But the man can yield up his life to do God service, and he can typify this offering and this presenting of himself as 'a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice,' by the shedding of the blood, the giving of the life, of the creature which (in a certain sense) is regarded as standing in his place. It perhaps cannot be safely asserted that every Israelite, or even every priest under the Law, rose to this conception of a sin offering: we know how under a more spiritual dispensation sacraments are apt to lose their meaning, or even to be converted into superstitious charms; but certainly this seems to be the root idea of an offering of blood. It was the doctrine that *the blood is the life*,<sup>1</sup> which made the blood of a bullock or a goat, slain as a sacrifice for sin, a suitable expiation, and a fitting teacher to people in rude times as to what the nature of sin is.

The ceremonial system of the Israelitish Church, however, was not, and was not intended to be, permanent. The Epistle to the Hebrews expounds in a very striking manner the way in which it made preparation for, and ultimately merged in, the ordinance of a new and better covenant. A reference to that Epistle will be our best aid in passing to that view of the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, which specially belongs to the dispensation of Jesus Christ. Let the reader bear in mind the quotation lately made from the book of Leviticus, and then let him examine the following passages from the Epistle to the Hebrews:

*Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered*

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xii. 23.

*Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ?*<sup>1</sup>

Again: *Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us : nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others ; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world : but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*<sup>2</sup>

Once more: *The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered ? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me : in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God. . . . And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins : but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God ; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*<sup>3</sup>

These quotations, which it was necessary to make at some length, will help us to understand the special manner in which a belief in the forgiveness of sins forms part of the Christian Creed. The contrast is put forward between the blood of bullocks and goats, and the blood of Christ: between blood shed day by day and year by year upon an altar of sacrifice, and blood shed once for all upon the cross: between a continuous body of high priests succeeding each other by in-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 11-14.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ix. 24-26.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. x. 1-14.

heritance, and the one great High Priest, who is represented as having once offered up Himself. In contemplation of this one great High Priest and this one great Sacrifice, all the thoughts connected with sacrificial cleansing and propitiation under the Law would be infinitely intensified: if it was a solemn thing to think upon, that the wages of sin was death, and that life must be sacrificed to put away sin, though the life sacrificed were but that of a dumb creature, how much more solemn a thing to be taught to find the true antitype of that old typical sacrifice in the great sacrifice of the life of Jesus Christ upon the cross! It would have been well-nigh impossible to make the cross of Christ intelligible in its sacrificial aspect, had it not been for the education which the Jews had received, and by them the rest of mankind, through the Law and its ordinances. The idea of sacrifice, and of sacrifice by blood, had become familiar, and was accepted; and therefore such words as those of St. John the Baptist, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*,<sup>1</sup> or as those others, *the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*,<sup>2</sup> became easily intelligible to ordinary minds.

When St. Paul was preaching in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, he used these remarkable words: *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*.<sup>3</sup> This comparison between the justification which could be obtained through Christ and that which could be had through the Law, agrees with the doctrine already quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews; but also it opens up the whole question of the forgiveness of sins, as connected with Jesus Christ, His teaching, His sufferings, His acts, His Divine being and history. The question should be treated from two points of view: (1) objectively, that is, with reference to the work of Christ independently of any personal participation by ourselves: (2) subjectively, that is, with reference to the part which we ourselves perform in regard to personal participation.

<sup>1</sup> St. John i. 29.<sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 10.<sup>3</sup> Acts xiii. 38, 39.

(1) That the objective view of the forgiveness of sins through Christ is a real one, that it is to be found in Holy Scripture, and therefore ought to be considered by students of the Creed, is manifest from such language as that which describes Christ as *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*.<sup>1</sup> These words seem to indicate, that the sacrifice of Himself offered by Christ is not to be regarded as an event limited by the conditions of time, and having its beginning and its end upon Calvary; but that, contrariwise, the crucifixion is to be regarded as the earthly shadow of some great reality, which existed before the earth was formed. And it may be observed, that the words from which this conclusion is drawn do not stand alone, but correspond to other words of the New Testament quite as transcendental as themselves. For example, St. Paul writes to the Ephesian Christians thus: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*.<sup>2</sup> With which words of St. Paul may be compared the not less striking language of St. Peter, *Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times*.<sup>3</sup>

It is not easy nor need it be supposed to be necessary, to reduce these remarkable declarations to such a form that they can be at once accepted as intelligible, like any ordinary human statement: but it may be possible to make a suggestion, which shall have the effect of enabling the mind in some way to grapple with them. Let it be taken as an axiom that the earth

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xiii. 8.<sup>2</sup> Eph. i. 3-7.<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. i. 18-20.



and its history are the outcome of a Divine purpose. If any one deny this, we have no common ground of discussion. Of course they who deny the being of a God must, by necessary consequence, deny purpose in creation; but with those who deny the being of a God we cannot now be concerned. The only choice seems to be between Divine purpose and chance; and the latter hypothesis is absolutely untenable. But if Divine purpose is conceded, what are to be the limits of its operation? Must it not run through the whole of the Divine economy? Can anything be left to chance? Must not the creation of man have been a conspicuous part of the Divine purpose? And if so, may we not believe that the greatest event in human history was, in the language of St. Peter, *fore-ordained before the foundation of the world*? The answer to these questions would seem to involve the eternal character of the Incarnation. Jesus Christ was born into the world from eternity, as man was created from eternity. With the conception of an eternal Divine purpose, as connected with Christ, many difficulties vanish.<sup>1</sup>

Let the reader examine the whole question of the relation of men to God, and of God to men, from the point of view which has been now suggested. Contrast it with another which might possibly be taken, and probably often is taken. Conceive the birth of Christ as an event happening in the ordinary course of human history; the birth of a confessedly remarkable

<sup>1</sup> It would be rash to connect the eternal purpose of the Incarnation with the eternal anticipation of human sin. Looking to sin as a great fact of human history, we naturally regard the thought of the Incarnation chiefly in the light which it throws upon atonement and forgiveness: but there seems no reason to suppose, that God would not have in some way come near to man and made Himself one with His creatures, if they had needed no such redemption as that which Jesus Christ obtained for them by His Cross and Passion. As Canon Mason expresses it: 'Did God intend something less glorious for humanity as He originally designed it, and then, when He saw us in rebellion, devise for us these overwhelming gifts? In that case the famous apostrophe *O felix culpa!*—"O happy fault!"—expresses a literal truth, and we have not only to thank God for giving us a Redeemer, but to thank Adam for drawing down to us, by his sin, One who was so much more than a Redeemer. The facts seem to be against such a theory. We can hardly think that God would have punished the race for loyalty to its Maker by withholding whatever He has bestowed, and what He always knew Himself able to bestow.'—*The Faith of the Gospel*. By A. J. Mason, B.D., p. 152.



person, but that and that only. Conceive His life and death in the same fashion ; a remarkable life and a remarkable death, which have undeniably produced results upon the subsequent history of mankind, such as can be attributed to no other causes, but such as are not distinct in kind from the results which other causes have produced. Take this view of Jesus Christ, and undoubtedly it becomes hard, or well-nigh impossible, to believe that His Cross and Passion should be objectively important facts of the highest order in man's moral and religious history. Moreover, it will be found that this view when once taken will tend to degenerate, and that everything worth believing concerning Christ will eventually vanish altogether. But the view set forth by the Church of Christ is essentially different. It is a transcendental, super-human, supernatural view : it looks out into eternity : but it is not unreasonable or incredible—nay, rightly considered, it is most reasonable, most credible. It recognises the Incarnation of Christ, and all connected with it, as an essential part of human history, foreseen and foreordained from the first : even the violent death of Christ was according to *the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God* :<sup>1</sup> and this being so, it is not difficult to believe that the grandest example of submission and self-sacrifice, which the world ever saw, may have had a direct effect upon the spiritual position of the race, so as to justify the wonderful language in which the death of Christ is always spoken of by His Apostles and disciples. *The handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, is said to have been nailed to His Cross.*<sup>2</sup> *He is the propitiation for our sins, says St. John : and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*<sup>3</sup> *Behold the Lamb of God, cried St. John the Baptist, which taketh away the sins of the world.*<sup>4</sup> Such language abounds in the New Testament : it is not an occasional outburst of enthusiasm ; it is the diapason of Gospel music ; it is the sound which in one form or another ever makes itself heard throughout.

It will of course be conceded, that it is not possible to reduce

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Col. ii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> St. John i. 29.

the Incarnation of Christ, and the forgiveness of sins, to such an obvious relation of cause and effect that the human understanding shall entirely grasp the whole manner of operation, as it can in physical matters or in spiritual things of a simple kind. You pull a trigger, and a gun is fired; you can trace the mechanical, the chemical, and the physical links, which connect one event with the other. You write a letter; two days afterwards a parcel is delivered at your house, and you can note the whole machinery by which the result is produced. Or you can knit together as cause and effect an idea conceived by a great statesman in his study, and some revolution which subsequently affects the whole civilised world. In the case of redemption and the forgiveness of sins, it may be readily conceded that this kind of process is impossible: it may be suggested that it is unwise to attempt it. If the ways of God are in any department past finding out, it may well be that they are so here: and when theologians deal with the varied figures, used in the Holy Scriptures to represent the scheme of redemption, as more than figures, and as if they might be treated on principles applicable to ordinary human processes, it is impossible not to feel that they invite their disciples to a field of thought, into which it is difficult and perhaps impossible for many minds to follow them. The wise course would seem to be to contemplate the Incarnation in all its infinitely wonderful proportions, and then to be prepared to accept great spiritual results with regard to the whole human race as flowing from the same, although the exact connection between cause and result may be beyond our view. The understanding may not be able to measure, but the reason can without difficulty accept, such a statement as that which is contained in the words, *God so loved the world, that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*<sup>1 2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. John iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Respecting the redemptive act itself, and the Divine agent, we know from revelation that He *was made a quickening* (ζωοποιόν, life-making) *Spirit*; and that in order to this it was necessary that God should be *manifested in the flesh*: that the Eternal Word, through whom and by whom the world (κόσμος, the order, beauty, and sustaining law of visible nature) was and is, should be

Let me take occasion from the words just quoted to remark, that the key to the whole mystery which is under our consideration is to be found in the assertion, that *God loved the world*, or in that parallel and still more remarkable phrase in St. John's first Epistle, *God is love*.<sup>1</sup> If it be argued, that upon the hypothesis of this being the real character of the Creator of man, He had nothing to do but to wipe out human transgression, just as a large-hearted creditor might draw his pen through the record of a debt, it may be replied, that this is precisely one of the cases to which reference was lately made, in which we may easily go wrong by pressing too far a human figure. We may compare sin to a debt; but there is no reason to believe, that the conditions of a debt are identical with those of sin; and it may very well be, that the schism between men and God, between earth and heaven, consequent upon the rebellion of the will of men against the will of God, may require for its cure some treatment different in kind from that which is applicable to the extinction of a human debt. Men are obviously incompetent judges of the process, which may be necessary to do away with sin, and to produce reconciliation between man and God.

*God so loved the world.* It is difficult to evolve this thought by any speculation pure and simple; but every theory of creation seems to cry out for it and to demonstrate its necessity. *God made the world*, is a proposition which may very well be supported upon the ground of reason. *It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves*,<sup>2</sup> is a truth which most of us receive, not merely because we find it in the hundredth Psalm, but because our instinct and our reason agree in declaring it; but when instinct and reason have got thus far, our heart and our feelings demand something more, and this demand is met by the declara-

made flesh, assume our humanity personally, fulfil all righteousness, and so suffer and so die for us, as in dying to conquer death for as many as should receive Him. More than this, the mode, the possibility, we are not competent to know. It is . . . a mystery by the necessity of the subject—a mystery which, at all events, it will be time enough for us to seek and expect to understand when we understand the mystery of our natural life, and its conjunction with mind and will and personal identity.' Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 245.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. c. 3.

tion, *God loves the world*, and the proof of this love is to be found in His coming near to us in human form. If Christ be indeed God made man, is it hard to believe that in this man God's love is manifested, and that through this man is preached to the world the forgiveness of sins?

(2) Thus much for the objective view of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. It remains that we should consider the subjective view, that is to say, the receiving of forgiveness by each individual soul.

That this view is contemplated by the Apostles' Creed may be concluded, if on no other ground, at least upon consideration of the comment afforded by the Nicene, *I believe in one baptism for the remission of sins*. Baptism is an individual thing. *Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*,<sup>1</sup> said Ananias to penitent Saul. *What doth hinder me to be baptized?* asked the Ethiopian nobleman. *If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest*,<sup>2</sup> was Philip's reply. To believe in one baptism for the remission of sins, is to believe that it is competent for any person, on repentance, to be individually washed clean from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ. And, indeed, without the possibility of this application of the general doctrine to individual needs, the chief purpose of professing faith in the doctrine would be thwarted and brought to nought.

But we may go still further in the direction of the personal application of the doctrine of the remission of sins. Baptism, the sacrament of regeneration and new birth, stands out as the great ceremonial declaration of the possibility of each soul being washed clean from all pollution, and of each human creature, even the babe and suckling, being made 'a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.' But this great sacrament does not satisfy all the soul's needs. There are tendencies to sin in the regenerate: they who have once been washed may easily—who does not?—defile their white robes, and will require a daily washing in order that they may be clean. He who believes in

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Acts viii. 36, 37.



the forgiveness of sins will know how this cleansing can be effected: he who looks with one eye upon his own faults and infirmities, and with the other eye upon Christ, will say with the woman in the Gospel, *If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.*<sup>1</sup> There is not only such a thing as sin, but there is also such a thing as a sense of sin. And this sense of sin is an inward and individual thing: it is no mere theory concerning the spiritual state of man, no speculation about the nature of evil, no feeling stirred up by the contemplation of wickedness all round about us: but it is a discovery which a man makes concerning himself, and his inner life, and his position in the sight of God. *Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?*<sup>2</sup> *I will lay my hand upon my mouth. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*<sup>3</sup> And so in another age and under a new dispensation, St. Paul says that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*<sup>4</sup> Extraordinary language; but undoubtedly the utterance of an honest, as well as a broken and a contrite, heart.

To sum up all, let it be observed, that the service of the Christian Church which chiefly sets forth the Passion, as well as the power and glory, of Christ—namely, the service of the Holy Communion—does also chiefly set forth the weight of the burden of sin, the sacrifice of the death of Christ by which that burden is removed, and the possibility of obtaining through that sacrifice the remission of sins. Note the strength of the language in which the Eucharistic worshippers are instructed to bewail their sins. *We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against Thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly Thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable.* Note again the language in which the worshippers beseech their Heavenly Father to grant that by the merits and death of His Son Jesus Christ,

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. ix. 21.<sup>2</sup> Job xl. 4.<sup>3</sup> Job xlii. 6.<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. i. 15.



and through faith in His blood, they and all the whole Church of God may obtain *remission of their sins*, and all other benefits of His Passion. Note in fact the uniform tone of humble petition concerning sin, which those who join in the Holy Communion are instructed to adopt. Yet they, who are supposed to take such a view of their sins, are those who are regarded as the leaders of the Christian Church, the lights which are to lighten their brethren! If these *scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*<sup>1</sup> The fact is, that they who use the language of the Communion Office aright are not those whose misdoings afflict and shame others, but rather those who feel the greatness of these misdoings themselves. And it is persons who have thus confessed their faults, and who have sought and found true spiritual communion with Christ, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, who will be able in the fullest manner to enter into the deep meaning of the words, *I believe the forgiveness of sins.*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter iv. 18.



## CHAPTER XII

### ARTICLE XI

#### THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

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*The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall  
hear His voice, and shall come forth—ST. JOHN v. 28, 29*

## AN ENGLISH BAPTISMAL CREED

(From Edward VI.'s First Prayer Book.)

A.D. 1549

1. *Doeste thou beleve in God the Father almightie,  
Maker of heaven and yearth ?  
I beleve.*
2. *Dost thou beleve in Jesus Christ hys onely begotten Sonne,  
our Lord ;*
3. *And that he was conceived by the holy Gost,  
Borne of the Virgin Mary ;*
4. *That he suffered under Poncius Pilate, was crucified,  
Dead and buried ;*
5. *That he went down into hell ;  
And also did ryse agayne the thyrde daye ;*
6. *That he ascended into heaven ;  
And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almyghtie ;*
7. *And from thence shall come agayne at the end of the worlde,  
To iudge the quicke and the deade ?  
Dost thou beleve this ?  
I beleve.*
8. *Dost thou beleve in the holy Gost ;*
9. *The holy Catholike Churche ;  
The communion of saynctes ;*
10. *Remission of sinnes ;*
11. *Resurreccion of the fleshe ;*
12. *And everlastyng lyfe after death ?  
I beleve.*

Substantially the same as that of the Second Prayer Book, and as that now in use.

*Harmonia Symbolica, p. 114.*

## CHAPTER XII.

## ARTICLE XI.

## THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY. (R., F.)

IN the Book of Common Prayer there are several forms of expression of the Christian belief concerning the resurrection of the dead. The Apostles' Creed, in the article now to be discussed, speaks of *the resurrection of the body*; in the Nicene we say, *I look for the resurrection of the dead*; in the office of Holy Baptism the question is put, *Dost thou believe in the resurrection of the flesh?* and in the Creed of St. Athanasius we speak of the Lord Jesus Christ coming to judge the quick and the dead, *at whose coming all men shall rise again with their own bodies, and shall give account of their own works.*

These various enunciations of that which is undoubtedly intended to be the same doctrine, may rightly be regarded as mutually throwing light upon each other. The comparison of them all seems to lead to the conclusion, that what Christians are taught to believe and confess is, that mankind will live again after their mortal life on earth has come to a close; that this belief does not imply merely an immortality of the soul, but a revival in personal identity; and that this resurrection or revival is closely and organically connected with the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is clear that if this statement of the meaning and extent of the Article be correct, the foundation on which it rests must be mainly faith. The introduction of the notion of the second coming of Jesus Christ at once necessitates this conclusion; but independently of this, the precise and definite form, which the recognition of a future life assumes in all the formulæ of Christian belief, goes beyond anything which philosophy or



reasoning can at all pretend to have ascertained, or even made probable. Nevertheless, human reason can supply something in the nature of a foundation-stone: books and history and experience shew that there is an element in man's mind, which reaches out to and welcomes the doctrine of a future life: *life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel*,<sup>1</sup> but they had lurked in the twilight of human intelligence for long ages before they were brought into Gospel light. Hence I have marked this article with the symbol R., as well as with the symbol F.; and it will be desirable to ascertain, before considering it in the full light of Christian faith, what human reason has done or can do towards the establishment of the doctrine.

To this end perhaps no better course can be adopted than to refer to the beliefs and practices of ancient Egypt.

The great care of the Egyptians was directed to their condition after death; that last state towards which their present life was only a pilgrimage; and they were taught to consider their abode here merely as an 'inn' upon the road. They looked forward to being received into the company of that Being, who represented the Divine Goodness, if pronounced worthy at the great judgment day; and the privilege of being called by his name was the fulfilment of all their wishes. Everyone was then the same; all were 'equally noble'; there was no distinction of rank beyond the tomb; and though their actions might be remembered on earth with gratitude and esteem, no king or conqueror was greater than the humblest man after death; nor were any honours given to them as heroes. And if ceremonies were performed to the deceased, they were not in honour of a man translated to the order of the gods, but of that particular portion of the divine essence which constituted the soul of each individual, and returned to the Deity after death. Everyone, therefore, whose virtuous life entitled him to admission into the regions of the blessed, was supposed to be again united to the Deity, of whom he was an emanation; and, with the emblem of Thmei, purporting that he was judged or justified, he received the holy name of Osiris.<sup>2</sup>

With these solemn views of death and of a life beyond death were bound up, as is well known, most elaborate practices with

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Gardner Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptians*, vol. ii. chap. x.

regard to the care of the bodies of deceased persons. The mummies of Egypt are one of the wonders of the world: the skill in embalming was as remarkable as the care bestowed; and our own days have witnessed the discovery of the tombs, and the publication by photography of the actual features, of some of Egypt's mightiest kings, notably of Rameses II., the great warrior and conqueror. It will be observed that the question, how near the Egyptians came to the truth as concerns the connection between death and a future life, is one of only a secondary kind: doubtless there was much of superstition and priestcraft mixed up with their religious speculations and belief and practices. But the point to be noted is this, that as a matter of fact the Egyptian people, thousands of years ago, in what may be described as the infancy of the human race, did somehow evolve and organise a religious system, of which it might be said that the very central principle was a belief in the resurrection of the dead. This is one of those great human truths which it is impossible to put on one side: like the Pyramids of that same wonderful land, it is one of the loftiest, most lasting, and most wonderful of human facts.

On the whole subject of the various views which have been entertained concerning a future life, the reader may be referred to a very comprehensive work, which is due to American learning and industry. It is entitled 'A Critical History of a Future Life.'<sup>1</sup> This volume contains chapters on the Barbarian, the Druidic, the Scandinavian, the Etruscan, the Egyptian, the Brahmanic and Buddhist, the Persian, the Hebrew, the Rabbinical, the Greek and Roman, and the Mohammedan doctrines of a future life. It also contains an appendix which gives a complete bibliography of the subject, comprising references to about five thousand works. I confess that attention is here called to the volume in question, not so much in the expectation that the reader will examine it, as for the purpose of indicating the immense extent of inquiry over which a complete investigation of the subject might conduct one who was prepared to

<sup>1</sup> By the Rev. W. R. Alger, New York.

undertake it. Such complete investigation, however, is by no means the intention of the present writer: my purpose is rather to indicate what may be regarded as the foundations of belief in a future life, especially in that particular form in which the doctrine is presented in the Apostles' Creed. For this purpose we need not examine all the anticipations of the truth which are to be found in the beliefs or superstitions of all the nations. The reference already made to Egyptian doctrine and practice may be sufficient as an example of knowledge outside the Church. The case of Egypt proves that which all other national religions, if they agreed with each other, could only confirm, namely, that it is possible, and that there seems to be a natural instinct, to look beyond the present life, to believe in a life to come, and to connect the two lives by moral considerations depending upon things done in the body, whether good or bad.

Passing away, therefore, from the doctrine of the ancient Egyptians, the first thing perhaps that strikes us is the strange contrast between this doctrine and that which we find in the teaching of Moses. The reader is probably acquainted with the great work of Bishop Warburton on this subject. The contention of the 'Divine Legation of Moses' is substantially this—that the main engine employed by the rulers of peoples in ancient times was an appeal to their fears and superstitions concerning the future life; that Moses did not avail himself of this engine; and that this abstinence from the ordinary practice is to be accounted for by the supposition, that Moses was conscious of a Divine mission or legation, which enabled him to dispense with such assistance. On the whole, Bishop Warburton's argument has probably been regarded by not a few as a clever bit of fencing rather than as real warfare, ingenious rather than convincing: and it seems sometimes to be assumed, that with this kind of criticism the 'Divine Legation' may be left upon the shelf. Nevertheless, the point upon which Bishop Warburton founds his argument is either true or false as a matter of fact, whatever may be the value of the conclusions drawn from it. The people of Israel came out of Egypt under the leading of Moses.

*Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.*<sup>1</sup> Those practices which Sir Gardner Wilkinson describes must have been matter of daily observation, and the doctrines of Egypt concerning a life to come must have been familiar to the great lawgiver's mind. Hence it is a phenomenon of the most striking kind, that the religious system of the Israelites should have been what it was. It undoubtedly is not based upon the doctrine of a future life. This is a simple truth, which the reading of the Pentateuch demonstrates beyond all possibility of denial. When our blessed Lord was challenged by the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead, He did not quote any distinct teaching, or declare that the doctrine was universally recognised by the Law and the Prophets, but He referred to an indirect assertion of the doctrine in the incident of Moses and the burning bush: *Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him.*<sup>2</sup> No one can fail to be struck by the profundity of this remark. Sometimes an incidental flash throws more light into a subject than the most laborious attempt to illuminate: and so it is here. Nevertheless the fact remains, that throughout the antediluvian as well as throughout the patriarchal period, a curtain is hung over the future world, and that Moses does not directly lift the curtain, but does, as Warburton asserts, seek the sanction for his laws from considerations depending upon this life, and not upon the life to come.

In reality the belief in a resurrection of the dead appears to have grown up by a gradual process in the Hebrew Church. It is not at all asserted that there are not here and there in Old Testament writers passages, which, especially with the light of subsequent knowledge reflected upon them, seem to speak of a future life; but it is perfectly certain that the doctrine of a resurrection is not *the* doctrine of the Old Testament as it is of the New. Bishop Warburton's theory may be fanciful, un-

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xx. 37, 38.



tenable, erroneous; but this admission does not obliterate the very striking phenomenon, that the education of the Israelitish nation and Church did not start from the platform which had been attained by the religion of Egypt, but began again with an announcement of the Being of the One God. That was just *the* truth which Egypt, with its manifold debasing superstitions, wanted or had lost; it was the proper basis of all other religious knowledge; it was the root from which the true theory of human life would grow. It is not necessary to discuss the extent to which the Jews were indebted to their contact with other people, and other religious systems, during their great captivity, for the development of the doctrine of a future life: it may very well be, that in the good providence of God this was part of their education: that which it chiefly concerns us to observe is, that at the time of the advent of Christ the belief in this doctrine was regarded as orthodox. The Sadducees, who denied it, were a comparatively small sect, and not influential in the religious world. The Pharisees carried all before them; and when, on the occasion of the death of Lazarus, the Lord said to Martha, *Thy brother shall rise again*, she replied with perfect readiness and simplicity, *I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day*<sup>1</sup>—evidently expressing in these words, not any special knowledge or belief of her own, but the generally accepted doctrine of the Jewish Church of her time.

The clearness of conception, which had been reached before or about this period, may be seen in the striking passage on the subject which occurs in the Book of Wisdom. The date of this work is uncertain, and is placed by some critics as early as about 200 B.C., while by others it is referred to [a] date subsequent to our Lord's life on earth. The testimony to Jewish belief is valuable, even if the latter supposition should be true, as it is quite clear from internal evidence that the work is Jewish and not Christian.

*The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them.*

<sup>1</sup> St. John xi. 23, 24.



*In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die : and their departure is taken for misery.*

*And their going from us to be utter destruction : but they are in peace.*

*For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality.*

*And having been a little chastened, they shall be greatly rewarded : for God proved them and found them worthy for Himself.<sup>1</sup>*

Reference may also be made to the account of the horrible tortures and cruel death to which certain Jews were subjected by Antiochus Epiphanes, as recorded in the second book of Maccabees. When asked to eat swine's flesh, one of these martyrs said, *Thou like a fury takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for His laws, unto everlasting life.*<sup>2</sup> This noble confession may be taken as representing Jewish belief a century and a half before the coming of Christ. There can be little or no doubt, that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews had such persecutions as those under Antiochus Epiphanes in his mind, when he wrote the words : *Women received their dead raised to life again : and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance ; that they might obtain a better resurrection.*<sup>3</sup>

On the whole it seems to be clear that the doctrine of a resurrection did not form a part of the original teaching of the Jewish Church, but that it was a recognised doctrine in the time of Christ. The Lord would scarcely have been regarded as a teacher worthy of serious attention, if He had uttered any doctrine short of or inconsistent with this. It would have been, in modern phraseology, a retrograde movement. What the Lord actually did was to throw a new and intensely bright light upon a doctrine accepted amongst His own countrymen, though far from accepted in the world at large, by His own teaching and by His own resurrection from the dead.

With regard to His teaching, it will be observed that He did not enunciate any abstract dogma concerning the immortality

<sup>1</sup> Wisdom iii. 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Macc. vii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xi. 35.

of the soul ; but He connected the future life distinctly with Himself and His own power over human destinies. Here are some of His most emphatic words: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation ; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God : and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself ; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself ; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this : for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*<sup>1</sup> Let the reader note the manner in which the future of the dead is connected with a Divine commission, given by the Father to the Son, because He is not only the Son of God, but the Son of man. It will not be attempted to explain the mystery, or to offer a complete commentary upon the passage ; but it will be seen that according to the teaching of Christ, the resurrection of mankind and His own Incarnation are closely bound up together.

Take another passage.

*This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day. . . . No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him : and I will raise him up at the last day.*<sup>2</sup> The declaration contained in these verses differs from that previously quoted, because it refers not to a general rising at the voice of the Son of man, but to a special raising at the last day of those who have been drawn to Him and have come to Him. But the point to be noted is still the same, namely, the power of resuscitation as vested in Christ Himself: no dogma of the

<sup>1</sup> St. John v. 24-29,

<sup>2</sup> St. John vi. 39, 40, 44,

immortality of the soul, as has been already stated, but a life depending upon the will of the Father as put in force by the Son. Not—they shall rise again, because the spirit of man cannot die: but—I, even I, the Son of God and the Son of man, will raise them up at the last day.

This view of the resurrection, as connected with the Divine humanity of Christ, comes out perhaps still more brightly in the history of the raising of Lazarus, and the language uttered by the Lord in connection with that resurrection.<sup>1</sup> The miracle may be described as the most notable that Christ performed. It seems to have been wrought for a special purpose, quite beyond any question of compassion towards the family at Bethany. There is a kind of solemn preparation for it, different from anything to be found on other occasions: there is, if we may venture to say so, an appearance of effort and deep emotion connected with it, which are unusual, even unexampled: it was, as it were, kept to the last, as the crown and climax of the signs which the Lord manifested. It is capable of being regarded as a foretaste and example upon a small scale of that great future resurrection, the motive power of which, as we have seen already, is to be the voice of Christ. But no circumstance in the history of the raising of Lazarus, thus regarded, is equal in force and importance to certain language which was used in preparation for it. It has already been observed, that, in answer to the promise, *Thy brother shall rise again*, Martha said unto Him, *I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day*: it is the reply to this profession of faith upon which it is desired now to lay stress. *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in*

<sup>1</sup> 'In that household of disciples,' writes Dr. Edersheim, concerning the family at Bethany, 'the mourning would not have assumed such violent forms, as when we read that the women were in the habit of tearing out their hair, or of a Rabbi who publicly scourged himself. But we know how the dead would be spoken of. In death the two worlds were said to meet and kiss, and now they who had passed away beheld God. They were at rest. Such beautiful passages as Ps. cxii. 6; Prov. x. 7; Is. xi. 10, last clause, and Is. lvii. 2, were applied to them. Nay, the holy dead should be called *living*. In truth, they knew about us, and still surrounded us. Nor should they ever be mentioned without adding a blessing on their memory.'—*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book IV., chap. xxi.

*Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.*<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to conceive more forcible words—words which seem to assert and assume all that is contained in the declarations previously quoted, and to concentrate them in a short phrase of imperishable quality and infinitely far-reaching meaning. *I am the Resurrection and the Life.* The words may be compared with others. *I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life:*<sup>2</sup> *I am the Bread of Life:*<sup>3</sup> *I am the living Bread which came down from heaven:*<sup>4</sup> *I am the Door:*<sup>5</sup> *I am the true Vine.*<sup>6</sup> Language of this kind is certainly notable: the most careless can scarcely fail to be struck by it: to any one who accepts the truth of the Divine mission of Christ, the declaration by Him that He Himself *is* the Resurrection and the Life would seem to make it easy to say, *I believe the resurrection of the dead.*

It should be added, before leaving the history of the resurrection of Lazarus, that this sign is of a kind which was apparently sparsely used by the Lord Jesus. There are only two other recorded cases, namely, that of the daughter of Jairus,<sup>7</sup> and that of the widow's son at the gate of Nain.<sup>8</sup> It is not within the scope of the present work to discuss these two miracles, their probable significance, and the reasons why they were performed: but it is quite germane to its purpose to notice the rare character of this particular form of miracle, and to suggest that it may be rightly regarded as a practical assertion on the part of our Lord of His power over death.

But the most distinct and eloquent assertion of this power is to be found in His own resurrection from the dead. This fact in our Lord's history has been already discussed in its proper place as an article of the Apostles' Creed. It remains for us to regard it in relation to the article with which we are now dealing, namely, the general resurrection of the dead. This relation may perhaps be most usefully considered under the light thrown upon it by St. Paul in his great resurrection homily in the first Epistle to the Corinthians.

<sup>1</sup> St. John xi. 25, 26.<sup>4</sup> St. John vi. 51.<sup>7</sup> St. Mark v. 35-42.<sup>2</sup> St. John xiv. 6.<sup>5</sup> St. John x. 9.<sup>8</sup> St. Luke vii. 11-15.<sup>3</sup> St. John vi. 35.<sup>6</sup> St. John xv. 1.



That homily is notable, not only because it has been recognised amongst ourselves as the most suitable lesson for the service of the burial of the dead, but also in consequence of the principle of the argument which the Apostle adopts. It will be observed that amongst the Corinthians some scepticism had manifested itself on the subject of the resurrection of the dead. This was not much to be wondered at: the belief in a resurrection was not congenial to the Greek tone of thought: and so we read that, when St. Paul spoke before the Court of Areopagus at Athens concerning the judgment of the world in righteousness by Him whom God had raised from the dead, some who heard him speak of the resurrection of the dead *mocked*, and others said, *We will hear thee again of this matter*.<sup>1</sup> Hence it seems natural enough, that although at Corinth the preaching of the Apostles had been received, and as part of it the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, there should nevertheless be some who would endeavour to discredit the doctrine, and who would perhaps mock like the men of Athens, or at all events give heed to those who did. St. Paul opens the subject with the words, *Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?*<sup>2</sup> A connection seems to be asserted between the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a fact of history, and the resurrection of mankind as a fact of Christian anticipation. St. Paul considers that as a fact of history the resurrection of Jesus Christ was undeniable: he summarises the evidence of it: mentions the names of several persons who had seen the risen Lord, appeals to the testimony of more than five hundred who saw Him at once, declares that in a certain sense he had seen Him himself. Whether this evidence was sufficient is not now the question; to the mind of St. Paul it was, and he assumes the same to have been the case with the Corinthians: the question is, granting the fact of the Lord's resurrection, what does it prove as concerning the resurrection of mankind? St. Paul replies that the two things go together. He regards the resurrection of Christ as a phenomenon which cannot stand by itself.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 32.<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 12.



Christ is the head of the human race, the pattern man : what is true of Him must in some sense be true of the race : what is true of the race must be true of Him. If men fall into the grave and decay and there an end, then it is impossible to believe in the resurrection of Christ : on the other hand, if we do believe in the resurrection of Christ, then we cannot regard His risen body otherwise than as the firstfruits of the great harvest of men, who will one day be raised by that same power which raised Him from the dead. It is a striking argument ; and it shews how close in the mind of St. Paul was the connection between Christ and mankind, how the Apostle saw the whole history and destiny of the race in the light of the Incarnation, how the resurrection of mankind was to him a truth morally, if not logically, consequent upon that other truth of which he had (as he believed) sufficient evidence, namely, that Jesus Christ had risen again from the dead.

There can be little doubt, that, in the minds of the early Christians, the working argument in favour of the resurrection of the dead was something like that which was exhibited by St. Paul to the Corinthians. In fact, it may perhaps be suggested as probable, that one reason for the constant asseveration of the truth of the Lord's resurrection was the comforting assurance, which this article of faith gave to men, who were persecuted and despised, accounted as the offscouring of all things, and in daily danger of a violent death ; the assurance, that is, that they themselves should rise again, after their painful experience of this present world, to a glorious and blissful immortality. This was not, of course, the only reason for enforcing the doctrine : it formed an essential part of the general truth of the being and nature of Christ : still it might be an additional reason for regarding it as what may be called a favourite doctrine, that it exactly met the wants of the early Christians, and supplied a source of consolation precisely fitted to their needs. He who can say, 'I believe in Jesus Christ, who was crucified, dead, and buried : on the third day He rose again,' can also say with confidence, 'I believe the resurrection of the dead.'

The analogy between the resurrection of the Lord Jesus on the third day and the resurrection of mankind, while it throws light upon a very difficult subject, does also at the same time introduce a special ground of questioning and of difficulty, which ought not to be passed over without notice.

The body of the Lord which rose from the tomb, though (as already pointed out) a glorified body and not subject to all natural laws, was nevertheless in a very true sense the actual body which was crucified. *Behold My hands and My feet*, said the Lord to His disciples, *that it is I Myself. Handle Me, and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.*<sup>1</sup> Such language, and indeed all the concomitant circumstances of the resurrection, tend to identify the Lord's body before and after the resurrection as materially the same. And if this be so, an argument may be raised in favour of the same material identity between the bodies of men in their graves and the bodies which rise at the last day ; which conclusion is strengthened by the phrase used in the baptismal service, 'the resurrection of the *flesh*,' and the language of the Athanasian Creed, 'shall rise with *their own bodies*.' Indeed, some have argued that the Christian faith demands this miracle, and have asserted that the same power which can restore life can bring limb to limb and particle to particle, as in the Vision of Ezekiel, and so restore the identical material bodies which were once consigned to the tomb. This view of the possibilities of the future resurrection is mentioned here, because it is one which our present knowledge of matter and its laws renders it imperative upon all wise men to discard. Matter which appertains to one body at one time appertains to another body at another. The notion of particle being joined to particle, so as to re-form a certain body, involves an impossibility, because the same particle may have belonged to a thousand different bodies, and may be claimed by one as rightfully as by another. In fact, it is only necessary to bring the notion into contact with what we certainly know concerning material particles to break down and annihilate it.

<sup>1</sup> St Luke xxiv. 39.

Anyone who feels concerned by this statement, should bear in mind that the theory of material identity seems to be disposed of by two utterances, one by our Lord and the other by St. Paul.

The Sadducees, who did not believe in a resurrection, endeavoured to puzzle the Lord by a material difficulty connected with the belief, and, as they perhaps thought, inseparable from it. They put an imaginary case of a woman, who, in accordance with Jewish law, had married seven brothers in succession. The question propounded was this, In the resurrection to which of the seven would she belong? The answer of the Lord is memorable, because it not only solves the question propounded, but brushes away many cobwebs from the belief in an unseen world at the same time. *Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven.*<sup>1</sup> The spirit of these words seems to suggest, that nothing but confusion can arise from venturing to apply material reasonings to spiritual things. The thoroughgoing materialist will, of course, like the Sadducees, deny the existence of *angel and spirit*,<sup>2</sup> and of everything not subject to material laws. This view of the universe may perhaps be proved to be shallow and empty and untenable, but this is not the purpose which is in hand just now: the case considered is that of minds, which, without denying the possibility of spiritual existence, nevertheless see a difficulty in grasping the truth of a resurrection, which shall in one sense be material, seeing that it is called a 'resurrection of the body,' and yet shall not be subject to ordinary material laws. The difficulty is anticipated by St. Paul in the passage to which reference has been already made, and which will now be adduced.

In the great resurrection homily of the Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul represents an objector as asking the very question with which we are now dealing. *But some man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body*

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxii. 29, 30.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxiii. 8.

*do they come?* The answer is, *That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body.*<sup>1</sup> It may be granted that this is a parable, a resemblance, rather than a strictly parallel case: but it is a parable of wondrous force and simplicity, and seems to afford, not indeed the intellectual solution of a difficulty which is probably to human intellect insoluble in the nature of things, but a method by which the difficulty may be exchanged for another, which practically is no difficulty, because the process described is so familiar. It is a parable, moreover, which receives a very emphatic commentary from St. Paul's own words, *It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.*<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it may be maintained with some confidence, that the resurrection of the body is in itself not more incredible than the change of a grain of wheat into a tall growing green plant, or of an acorn into an oak, or of a grub into a butterfly. These latter processes involve the mystery of life, concerning which we know as near to nothing as may be; the process first named involves confessedly a higher mystery still, namely, that which is connected with the transition from the material to the spiritual; but with regard to abstract credibility they stand upon a level, and probably the only reason why some men believe in the resurrection of the seed, and do not believe in the resurrection of the body, is that they have witnessed the one and have never yet witnessed the other.

A deeper difficulty, as it seems to me, is that which is connected with the question of personal identity.<sup>3</sup> Probably

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 35-38.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 44.

<sup>3</sup> This 'identity of Mind or Person,' writes Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh), 'consists in the assurance we have, from consciousness, that our thinking Ego, notwithstanding the ceaseless changes of state or modification, of which it is the subject, is essentially the same thing—the same person at every stage of its existence. On this subject, laying out of account certain subordinate differences on the mode of stating the fact, *philosophers in general are agreed*—Locke in



many of the readers of this book are acquainted with Bishop Butler's tract on this subject. It bears the impress of the mind of the great author of the 'Analogy,' and is worthy of careful study, as need scarcely be said. I quote the opening paragraphs :

Whether we are to live in a future state, as it is the most important question which can possibly be asked, so it is the most intelligible one which can be expressed in language. Yet strange perplexities have been raised about the meaning of that identity, or sameness of person, which is implied in the notion of our living now and hereafter or in any two successive moments. And the solution of these difficulties hath been stranger than the difficulties themselves. For personal identity has been explained so by some, as to render the inquiry concerning a future life of no consequence at all to us, the persons who are making it. And though few men can be misled by such subtleties, yet it may be proper a little to consider them.

Now when it is asked, wherein personal identity consists, the answer should be the same, as if it were asked wherein consists similitude or equality ; that all attempts to define would but perplex it. Yet there is no difficulty at all in ascertaining the idea. For as, upon two triangles being compared and viewed together, there arises to the mind the idea of similitude ; or upon twice two and four, the idea of equality : so likewise, upon comparing the consciousness of one's self, or one's own existence, in any two moments, there immediately arises to the mind the idea of personal identity. And as the two former comparisons not only give us the ideas of similarity and equality, but also show us that two triangles are alike, and twice two and four equal, so the latter comparison not only gives us the idea of personal identity, but also shows us the identity of ourselves in these two moments ; the present, suppose, and that immediately past ; the

*Essay on the Human Understanding* ; Leibnitz in *Nouveaux Essais* ; Butler and Reid are particularly worthy of attention. In regard to this deliverance of consciousness, the truth of which is of vital importance, affording as it does the basis of moral responsibility and hope of immortality,—it is, like the last [that is, Mental Unity or Individuality] denied by Kant to afford a valid ground of scientific certainty. He maintains that there is no cogent proof of the substantial permanence of our thinking self, because the feeling of identity is only the condition under which thought is possible. Kant's doubt in regard to the present fact is refuted in the same manner as his doubt in regard to the preceding, and there are also a number of special grounds on which it can be shewn to be untenable.'—*Lectures on Metaphysics*, vol. i. p. 374.



present, and that a month, a year, or twenty years past. Or in other words, by reflecting upon that which is myself now, and that which was myself twenty years ago, I discern that they are not two, but one and the same self.<sup>1</sup>

Bishop Butler then proceeds to deal with certain objections and difficulties which had been raised in or before his time. The notion upon which such objections and difficulties chiefly depend appears to resolve itself into this, that 'Personality is not a permanent, but a transient thing.' 'From hence it must follow,' writes Butler, 'that it is a fallacy upon ourselves to charge our present selves with anything we did, or to imagine our present selves interested in anything which befell us yesterday; or that our present self will be interested in what will befall us to-morrow: since our present self is not, in reality, the same with the self of yesterday, but another like self—a person coming in its room, and mistaken for it; to which another self will succeed to-morrow.'

It seems right to observe that experience proves that the condition of things, which Bishop Butler here treats almost as presenting a *reductio ad absurdum*, does in some cases exist. Sufficient attention was, perhaps, not paid in former times to the material side of man's nature, and the intimate connection between the material and the spiritual. Memory, and therefore the consciousness of what we have been or have done in former years, undoubtedly depends upon material conditions. There are instances of persons who, after recovery from a severe fever, or similar physical disturbance, are unable to recall the past, though perfectly themselves with regard to the present; so that instead of that continuity which personal identity seems to postulate, there is in such cases an apparently abrupt division. In like manner, there are instances of persons, who, as the result of an accident which has affected the brain, have become different in tastes, habits, and moral qualities after the accident from that which they previously were. Still more remarkable cases have been reported of what

<sup>1</sup> Butler's *Works*, vol. i. p. 307.

almost amounts to a change of personality from day to day; so that a man shall be one person on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and another person, holding different opinions and having different tastes and feelings, on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.<sup>1</sup> Materialistic philosophers may claim this abnormal class of phenomena as evidence on their side of the question; it is not conclusive, for there are other phenomena which materialism cannot explain: but certainly the class of facts, to which reference has been made, adds to the puzzle of personal identity and demands to be recognised. The suggestion which reflection upon the subject leads me to make is this, that we must regard the anomalies to which attention has been directed distinctly as anomalies, depending on the composite nature of man. Butler writes, for example, 'All imagination of a daily change of that living agent which each man calls himself, for another, or any such change throughout our whole present life, is entirely borne down by our natural sense of things.' And again: 'All beings confessedly continue the same, during the whole time of there existence. Consider then a living being now existing, and which has existed for any time alive: this living being must have done and suffered and enjoyed, what it has done and suffered and enjoyed formerly (this living being, I say, and not another), as really as it does and suffers and enjoys, what it does and suffers and enjoys this instant. All these successive actions, enjoyments, and sufferings are actions, enjoyments, and sufferings of the same living being. And they are so, prior to all consideration of its remembering or forgetting—since remembering or forgetting can make no alteration in the truth of past matter of fact. And suppose this being endued with limited powers of knowledge and memory, there is no more difficulty in conceiving it to have a power of

<sup>1</sup> 'An instance is recorded of a young woman who habitually passed from one state of existence or consciousness to another, so distinct that when in the second state she knew nothing of what had happened in the first. For example, having returned upon one occasion from a funeral, she fell asleep, and awoke in a few minutes in her second state; all remembrance of the funeral was gone, and she wondered why she was in mourning. This case seems to have been carefully and scientifically watched for many years, and to have given undeniable evidence of what may be described as a double existence, a double consciousness.'—*Walks in the Regions of Science and Faith*, p. 60.

knowing itself to be the same living being which it was some time ago, of remembering some of its actions, sufferings and enjoyments, and forgetting others, than in conceiving it to know or remember or forget anything else.' Such observations as these it seems difficult altogether to reconcile with the existence of that class of phenomena to which reference has been previously made. May we not admit their force as applicable to men in their normal condition? And may we not deal with exceptional phenomena as things by themselves? just as when we lay down rules as applicable to men in general, we are bound to except either explicitly or implicitly the cases of idiots or lunatics. We speak of conscience as an attribute of humanity: but there are idiots and lunatics in whom conscience is wanting. We speak of a sense of honour as characterising men: but idiots and lunatics may possibly have no sense of honour. Ordinary human definitions, in fact, do not apply to these unfortunate members of the human family, who are altogether wanting in those qualities which chiefly distinguish manhood. Therefore we must simply leave such cases on one side, and not permit them to interfere with our general conclusions. Practically, no one has any doubt concerning the truth of personal identity: no trouble arises on the subject in law courts; a jury would regard any one who expressed a doubt concerning his own identity as giving clear indication that his state of mind with respect to sanity required investigation. And so, with regard to the resurrection, as connected with this same philosophically difficult question, we may be content with a plain man's view, and we may say that we accept as concerns the future life that which is found sufficient for the wants of the present.

One result of accepting the arguments of this chapter must be to desire some modification of the summing-up of the meaning and force of the article as given by Bishop Pearson. It is as follows:

Having thus discovered the truth of this article, we may easily perceive what every man is obliged to believe, and understood to profess, when he confesseth a belief in *the resurrection of the body*; for thereby he is conceived to declare thus much: I am fully persuaded

of this as a most necessary and infallible truth, that as it is appointed to all men once to die, so it is also determined that all men shall rise from death, that the souls separated from our bodies are in the hand of God and live, that the bodies dissolved into dust, or scattered into ashes, shall be re-collected in themselves, and re-united to their souls, that the same flesh which lived before shall be revived, that the same numerical bodies which did fall shall rise, that this resurrection shall be universal, no man excepted, no flesh left in the grave, that all the just shall be raised to a resurrection of life, and all the unjust to a resurrection of damnation ; that this shall be performed at the last day when the trumpet shall sound : and thus I believe in the resurrection of the body.

It is submitted that this exposition is too materialistic, and that it mixes up the real and the figurative in a manner calculated to produce confusion of thought, and perhaps in these days to generate unbelief. The concentration of the dust and ashes into which bodies have been dissolved, and the re-uniting them to their own souls, so that the same flesh which lived before shall be revived, is not so much an unfair tax upon human powers of believing, as the enunciation of a theory which a knowledge of the laws of matter shews to be untenable : the theory implies that the particles of matter into which a body has been resolved are reserved, in such manner as to be capable of identification and of being claimed for the soul to which they belong. This is not and cannot be so : and it had been well if all the language used in the exposition had been in harmony with the figurative words and phrases which occur in parts of it. Men's souls are *in the hand* of God : their bodies will rise *at the last day when the trumpet shall sound* : this rising will be the prelude to a judgment : there will be a resurrection of life and a resurrection of damnation. All this contains in forcible language, the more forcible because figurative and therefore capable of suggesting much which could not be expressed in actual words, the great mystery of the future of mankind ; but when particulars are added concerning physical conditions, we feel not only that these physical conditions are impossible, but that their introduction mars the grand solemnity of the picture and ought not to have been made.



One other consideration shall be introduced concerning the identity of *præ-resurrection* and *post-resurrection* personality, upon which it may be worth while that the reader should reflect.

It seems sometimes to be assumed that a man's whole personality is concentrated (so to speak) in that which he is at one particular moment; and in a certain sense and in certain cases this may be a necessary and a true assumption. Thus, if a man has committed a crime, it is no excuse to say that he had previously lived forty years of blameless life; the person with whom the law must deal as a criminal, is the actual being of flesh and blood by whom the crime was done. But when we look back upon remarkable men who have passed away, and whose careers are all before us—say, Shakspeare, Bacon, Milton—we cannot tie up their personality to any one particular moment or epoch of their lives: these men are inseparably connected in our conception with their whole career, and with their whole mind as expressed in their works. So that when a man has passed away, and posterity looks back upon him and speaks of him as a great or remarkable man, it is not easy to express, in clear and unmistakeable language, who or what is the actual person upon whom posterity looks back. It is, as it were, the general idea of the man, as formed upon all his thoughts and words and deeds, not an actual creature of flesh and blood who could be reproduced in a picture upon canvas, but an ideal personality, containing in itself all that the man ever thought or said or did, which is regarded as worthy of being preserved. Certainly there is no necessary continuity between the bodily and mental condition of men as they last appeared upon the world's stage, and the conception which posterity forms of them. A man may be cut off in his prime, and his portrait when so cut off may be that which posterity delights to look upon, as when a hero falls upon the battle-field, or a man's last words may be the wisest and best that he ever spoke; but in general the concluding months or years of a man's sojourn upon earth are not his best, frequently they are among the weakest and least memorable; and we gladly go back from the thought of senile infirmity or sick-bed decrepitude to the memory of what the



man was in his best days, when his body and mind were full of energy, and when his thoughts and deeds were at their culminating point. When Bacon left his character to the succeeding ages, he was conscious of the truth which I have been endeavouring to express, and he was trustful that the picture which posterity would preserve of him would be one in which the weaknesses of which he himself was conscious would not be conspicuous, and his god-like strength would remain.

Thus there is a difficulty in obtaining a complete definition of the personality of a departed man, even with reference to this present world: such an example as that just quoted proves that this is so. The controversy as to what Bacon really was can scarcely be said to be terminated in our own days; and when we speak of Shakspeare, it is easier to repeat the name than to define precisely what we mean by it.

Can we be surprised if this difficulty should be greatly magnified in the problem presented to our minds by the post-resurrection condition of mankind? May we not rightly and wisely acknowledge the problem to be insoluble, and take refuge in our Lord's declaration, that they who are thought worthy of the resurrection to eternal life will be like the angels of God in heaven?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It may be well to refer to another view of the subject, different from anything suggested in this chapter; but, while acknowledging the beauty of the conception, I confess that it appears to me to involve difficulties which prevent it from being accepted as a solution of the problem. I quote the words of Martensen. 'Many questions suggest themselves which must be left to pious expectation and presentiment to answer. Among these we may reckon that raised by the older theologians, viz., In what state, as it regards age, shall the blessed re-enter the heavenly body? Lutheran theologians, who have entirely overlooked the doctrine of the intermediate state, have for the most part entertained the idea that each one shall rise again in the glorified state of that age in which he was laid in the grave; the aged as aged, the child as a child, the maiden as a maiden. But as we are left to presentiment, we throw out the suggestion whether our Christian consciousness does not afford some ground for that view which was adopted in the middle ages, and put forth especially by Thomas Aquinas, viz., that our heavenly bodies shall possess that state, as it regards age, in which our Lord rose from the dead and went up to heaven in His glorified body? For our Lord Himself must ever be the perfect ideal, both of the absolute and unchanging youth and of the absolute maturity of eternity. *Till we all come*, says the apostle, *in the unity of the faith, and of*

This chapter must not close with such difficult thoughts as those, which have been now put forward concerning post-resurrection personality. Let us return for a moment into the brighter atmosphere of the resurrection, as it presents itself to simple unsophisticated minds. May it not be stated with truth, that, when the resurrection is viewed in connection with the resurrection of Christ, it presents itself as a doctrine easy of reception? The resurrection of Christ having been accepted as an historical fact, the whole body of humanity seems (as it were) to rise with His body; the aspect of man's future appears to be illuminated; the truth shadowed forth by the resurrection of Christ so corresponds to the instincts and longings of humanity, that the resurrection of the dead becomes in the light of Christ a most credible thing. The average Christian mind adopts as its own the question, which St. Paul asked before King Agrippa, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead?*<sup>1</sup>

And having once grasped the thought of a resurrection, we cannot part with it. It gradually becomes a governing thought, a guide to conduct, a light in darkness, a refuge from much of the sadness which the contemplation of the world brings with it. And there seems to be no reason why men in this nineteenth century should not adopt the jubilant language of St. Paul, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ:*<sup>2</sup> or those other words of the same Apostle, *We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.*<sup>3</sup>

*the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature (εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας) of the fulness of Christ.* (Eph. iv. 13.)—*Christian Dogmatics* (Eng. Transl.), p. 487.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvi. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 55-57.

<sup>3</sup> Philip. iii. 20, 21.



## CHAPTER XIII

### ARTICLE XII

AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING. AMEN

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*Jesus said, I am the Resurrection, and the Life : he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.—ST. JOHN xi. 25, 26*

## THE APOSTLES' CREED.

The parts without brackets represent, *on the whole*, the Western Creed of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Centuries.

1. *Credo in Deum Patrem Omnipotentem,*  
[*Creatorem cæli et terræ ;*]
2. *Et in Jesum Christum, Filium ejus unicum,*  
*Dominum nostrum ;*
3. *Qui [conceptus] est de Spiritu Sancto,*  
*Natus ex Mariâ Virgine ;*
4. [Passus] *sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus, [mortuus,]*  
*et sepultus ;*
5. [Descendit ad inferna ;]  
*Tertiâ die resurrexit a mortuis ;*
6. *Ascendit ad cælos ;*  
*Sedet ad dexteram [Dei] Patris [omnipotentis ;]*
7. *Inde venturus est*  
*Judicare vivos et mortuos.*
8. *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum ;*
9. *Sanctam Ecclesiam [Catholicam ;]*  
[*Sanctorum communionem ;*]
10. *Remissionem peccatorum ;*
11. *Carnis resurrectionem ;*
12. [Vitam æternam.]



## CHAPTER XIII.

## ARTICLE XII.

## AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING. AMEN. (R., F.)

BEFORE entering upon a discussion of this concluding article of the Creed, and of the grounds upon which it rests, it may be well to say something concerning the word *Everlasting* in connection with another word which is frequently used as equivalent to it, namely, the word *Eternal*.

That these two words are frequently used as equivalent to each other is obvious from examining either the authorised version of the New Testament or the Book of Common Prayer. For example, in St. Matthew xxv. 46 we have: *These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.* The revised version gives the passage thus: *These shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.* The latter is in a certain sense the more correct of the two, inasmuch as the same adjective *αἰώνιος* is applied in the original Greek both to punishment and to life. Nevertheless, it may be assumed that the translators who were responsible for the authorised version did not intend to imply any difference of meaning in the two cases, but were only acting upon their own acknowledged principle, that where there are more words than one in our language having the same meaning, it is well to employ sometimes one, sometimes another. 'That we should express the same notion in the same particular word; as for example, if we translate the Hebrew or Greek word once by *purpose*, never to call it *intent*; if one where *journeying*, never *travelling*; if one where *think*, never *suppose*; if one where *pain*, never *ache*; if one where *joy*, never *gladness*, &c. thus to mince

the matter, we thought to savour more of curiosity than wisdom, and that rather it would breed scorn in the atheist than bring profit to the godly reader.'<sup>1</sup> Whether in the instance under consideration the translators acted wisely, in using *eternal* and *everlasting* as the equivalents of the same Greek word in two successive clauses of the same verse, may fairly be doubted; but no conclusion can be drawn as to any difference of meaning between the two words.

The same result will follow from the comparison of St. Matthew xix. 16 with the twenty-ninth verse of the same chapter. In the former we read, *Behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*<sup>2</sup> It should be observed that there is a continuity between this application to our Lord and the general declaration, contained in the other verse to which reference has been made, and which runs thus: *Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*<sup>3</sup> Here we have the two words *eternal* and *everlasting* used indifferently: in both cases the adjective *αἰώνιος* occurs: and it is absolutely inconceivable that two different words should have been used to represent it, except on the supposition that in the minds of the translators the two were entirely equivalent.

Once more, the same result follows from comparing two consecutive verses of St. John's Gospel. *That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*<sup>4</sup> It is scarcely necessary to add that in both verses the adjective is *αἰώνιος*, and that in both the revised version reads *eternal*.

So far as Cruden's 'Concordance' can be trusted, the phrase *eternal life* occurs twenty-eight times in the authorised version of the New Testament, and *everlasting life* fourteen times: so that on the whole *eternal* may be regarded as the favourite rendering: but there seems to be no reason for the use in any

<sup>1</sup> *The Translators to the Reader*, prefixed to the authorised version of the Bible.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xix. 16.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xix. 29.

<sup>4</sup> St. John iii. 15, 16.

given instance of the one adjective rather than the other, except such as may depend upon euphony or variety.

A similar conclusion may be stated with reference to the Book of Common Prayer. For example: in the Collect for the second Sunday after Advent we have the phrase, 'we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of *everlasting* life:' again, in the Collect for St. John the Evangelist's Day, we pray for the Church that 'it may at length attain to the light of *everlasting* life:' and that for the second Sunday after the Epiphany commences with the words 'Almighty and *Everlasting* God.' On the other hand, the Collect for the sixth Sunday after the Epiphany speaks of 'the sons of God, and heirs of *eternal* life.' The word *everlasting*, however, very much predominates. This word occurs twice in the hymn *Te Deum*, in which we have, 'the Father *Everlasting*' and 'Thou art the *Everlasting* Son,' where the word in the original is *Æternus*. On the other hand may be quoted from the Order for the Burial of the Dead the fine phrase, 'Thou most worthy Judge *Eternal*,' and that other, 'sure and certain hope of the resurrection to *eternal* life;' while in the same office we find the two words combined in the phrase, 'our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy *eternal* and *everlasting* glory.'

On the whole it seems impossible to resist the conclusion, that, whether rightly or wrongly, the two words are used both in the authorised version of the New Testament and in the Book of Common Prayer as synonymous or equivalent. I lay stress upon this, because it may be represented, and sometimes seems to be supposed, that there is an essential distinction between the two. It may be said, and perhaps with some reason, that the word *everlasting* essentially involves the conception of *time*; that the phrase *last for ever*, or *ever-lasting*, implies a continuance of something which now exists, a simple perpetuation of that which might be expected to come to an end; whereas it may be argued that *eternity* implies, not the continuation of the conditions of time, but the negation of those conditions, the getting out of time into a region in which time shall be no condition of existence at all. A preacher is

reported to have said in illustration of the meaning of eternity something of this kind. 'Imagine all the sand which exists upon all the sea-shores of the whole world transported to one place, and collected in one heap. Imagine a bird to come every thousand years and to carry away one grain of sand. Imagine that whole mighty heap of sand to have disappeared. When it is all gone, eternity will still be in its infancy.' This kind of representation no doubt gives an immense, even an oppressive, conception of the duration of time; and it may be urged that the word *everlasting* well expresses the limit towards which such conceptions tend. But then it may be reasonably urged that just because any illustration such as this necessarily ties the thoughts to the conception of *time*, therefore it does not really help towards the conception of *eternity*: time is the very thing from which eternity ought to emancipate human thought: and so *eternal* is sometimes regarded as a good rendering of *αἰώνιος*, and *everlasting* as unsatisfactory.

It is not intended in this place to determine the relative excellence of the words, but only to point out that they seem to have been used in earlier times as entirely equivalent to each other. Consequently, in the last article of the Creed, 'the life everlasting,' I shall consider that we are at liberty to substitute, if we please, 'eternal life:' it may be noted that the Nicene Creed has neither the one phrase nor the other, but this—'the life of the world to come' (*ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος*).

That mysterious life—call it eternal, or everlasting, or of the world to come, or by whatever title seems most appropriate—which is possible for those who have already lived in this present world, is the subject of Christian belief according to the concluding article of the Apostles' Creed. It has been marked with R. and F., as indicating that its acceptance has some ground in reason, though undoubtedly faith may chiefly claim the doctrine as its own.

1. Some share of belief in the article is asserted on behalf of reason, because it is impossible to separate entirely belief in 'the life everlasting,' in its highest and most Christian form, from that lower kind of belief which is connected with the



simple notion of a future state of existence after natural death. The subject of a future state has already been discussed with reference to the preceding article, 'The resurrection of the body;' and what has been said shall not be repeated. But it is important to bear in mind, with reference to that higher view of everlasting life which Jesus Christ our Lord and His Apostles have placed before us, that it all fits on well with, and appears to be a Divine development of, those natural anticipations of some condition beyond the grave, which have manifested themselves in all times and places, even the darkest and most unfavourable. That phrase is very striking in which St. Paul speaks of *life and immortality*,<sup>1</sup> not as being primarily revealed by Jesus Christ, but as being brought into a new light and made conspicuous even to the simplest minds in a way in which they never had been before. We go back to a time before the rising of the Gospel sun, or we go to a country where 'darkness broodeth yet,' and we find that the pale lamp of reason has made visible, even in such circumstances, something of everlasting life. It may assume the grand form in which it presented itself to Socrates, or it may be no better than the guesses of what we sometimes call heathen superstition; but even in its simplest form it seems like the shadow of a great truth. Surely it is a result worthy of being produced by the reason of a creature into whose nostrils God has breathed the breath of life, and who has thus been made a living soul. For when the thought has once been suggested, that this endowment of life by the immediate gift of God must mean something more than the beating of a heart and the consequent circulation of blood and the exercise of bodily and mental activity during a few brief years, it is difficult to resist the suggestion: there is something in the human mind which responds to it; life everlasting seems to be that to which the human soul aspires. Is it not likely that the aspiration is God-given and true?

In dealing, however, with the life of the world to come as a question of human reason, it should be observed that the reality of a future condition for mankind is not necessarily bound up

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 10.



with the question of the being of God, or of religious belief in, and obligation in connection with, that being. It has been acutely remarked by Bishop Butler, that 'a proof, even a demonstrative one, of a future life, would not be a proof of religion. For, that we are to live hereafter, is just as reconcilable with the scheme of atheism, as well as to be accounted for by it, as that we are now alive is: and therefore nothing can be more absurd than to argue from that scheme, that there can be no future state.'<sup>1</sup> What I understand Butler to mean is this, that as it may be difficult for most persons to understand how they can be alive without a divine Giver of Life, and yet they are alive, so it may be true that they will live hereafter, even if there be no such Giver of Life, as they have been led to imagine. In fact, as the present life exists but it is an inscrutable mystery how it exists, so there may be a future life without the addition of any new mystery, or, at all events, of any mystery greater in kind than that which exists already. This view of the case may perhaps be worthy of consideration with reference to other forms of unbelief besides that of blank atheism, which Bishop Butler had before his mind. The Divine Being is unthinkable, inconceivable, inexplicable; so, it may be said, is a future life: but the present life would be inconceivable, if we did not realise its existence by experience: therefore the fact, if so it be, of our incapacity to know God, does not in itself render incredible the doctrine of a life to come. In other words, if the philosophy known as agnosticism be true, it does not necessarily follow that the belief in a future life is incapable of being held.

2. Having thus endeavoured to vindicate for reason as much as can be fairly claimed, we may pass on to the higher region of faith, and consider the article in the light which shines from that higher region.

The two words which constitute the article are the substantive *life* and the adjective *everlasting*, or (to use the word which, for reasons above given, seems preferable) *eternal*.

<sup>1</sup> *Analogy*, Part I. chap. i. p. 32.

With regard to the word *life*, it is, as goes without saying, intensely mysterious even when taken in its simplest physical signification. What is the life of a plant, of an animal, of a human creature? We see the results of life in assimilation, growth, motion, the power of exerting force, still more in the power of exerting will. The simplest man knows practically what life is, and the wisest and most philosophically minded man cannot fully and properly define it. If we talk of adaptation to environment, we by no means get at the mainspring of the machinery which makes the adaptation possible. If we talk of matter as having in it the potentiality of all terrestrial life, we virtually throw up the problem in despair, and take refuge in a formula which asserts a materialistic doctrine of an almost incredible kind. If we try to identify it with chemistry, we have an impassable gulf to bridge over. It is stated in some modern works on chemistry, that the old notion of vital powers, as distinguished from other powers, must be abandoned with many other old imaginations, and that it must be conceded to modern research that there is no real distinction between *vital* and *chemical*. This may be true in the sense in which probably it is intended: that is to say, it may be true that the transformations of matter, which take place in a living body, may all be referred to chemical laws: but life means more than digestion and assimilation and growth: it means volition and action, and where is the chemistry which will deal with such elements as these? And even if we stop far short of volition, is it not true that the vital processes are such as no existing chemical knowledge will explain? The food is changed by certain chemical processes into blood, and the blood is made to circulate by the action of the heart, carrying to every part of the body the material necessary to supply that which each part requires for renewal or growth: but why the material of muscle is supplied at one place, of fat at another, of hair at a third, and of nail at a fourth, can be explained (so far as I am aware) by no known chemical action. Of course, to speak of a vital force is not to give any real explanation: it may be regarded only as a phrase to cover ignorance: still it does express the fact that life possesses powers of its own, which have not yet,

like the powers of gravitation or electricity or chemistry, been explained or reduced to laws.

So that, after all the efforts of physicists and philosophers, life would seem to be the same mystery that it ever was—simple in its manifestations, obvious to the most careless observer, and yet going down lower into the abysses of the wonderful and the inexplicable than anything else with which man is brought in contact. Gravitation is wonderful. Why does that stone fall to the ground? I can tell you the law according to which it falls; I can solve an infinite number of problems depending upon the same principle; I can prove to you that the same cause which makes that stone fall keeps the whole material universe together; I can give you volumes of mathematical conclusions, capable of verification, depending upon that force which I call gravitation; but when you ask me what gravitation is and why it acts as it does, I am as ignorant as a child. It is the same with chemical phenomena. Take one single example: it shall be photography. A man who is a chemist and also a practical photographer can tell you all about this wonderful process, can discourse upon the sun's chemical rays, the method of developing the negative, the subsequent printing, and many other steps in the production of the grand result; but if you ask him why the sun's rays are such as they are, or if you pursue any one step of the process to its ultimate how or why, you find the mind of your expert to be an absolute blank.

If this be so with terrestrial mechanics and with chemistry, how much more deeply is it the case with life! Harvey discovered the fact of the circulation of the blood, but he could not tell what it was that made the heart to beat. Why *does* the heart beat? Who can tell? Nay, in the case of the humblest plant, what makes it grow? 'Why does yon hyssop grow upon the wall?' said Thomas Carlyle; 'because God makes it grow, that's why.' We cannot get beyond that.

If, then, life in its simplest exhibition be a dark, insoluble mystery, we must expect the darkness to be darker, and the mystery more mysterious, when we come to the consideration of life in its highest forms. Is human life, as we witness it in

this present world, the highest possible form of life? It would be rash, even upon the grounds of reason and philosophy, to assert that it is; why should it be? Is it not more probable, even upon these grounds, that there are developments of life higher and more wonderful than that of which we have personal experience? And, if we consider the question from a Christian point of view, it need hardly be said that the underlying assumption of the whole Christian faith is, that the present life of man is only a faint reflexion of the life of God, that in a future condition of things the reflexion will be much brighter than it is now, and that there are and ever will be higher intelligences than the human, exhibiting in a much clearer and more brilliant manner the light of the Divine mind and being. The idea of a celestial hierarchy,<sup>1</sup> which is developed in the work attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, has its basis in a reasonable and probable supposition: it is but the exaggeration and over-systematising of the idea of a hierarchy, of which we have hints in Holy Scripture. Thus the prophet Isaiah writes:

*I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.<sup>2</sup> So also, in the Book of Revelation, St. John was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne . . . and round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. . . . And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts [living creatures] full of eyes before and behind. . . . And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.<sup>3</sup>*

And the echo of these revelations is found in the hymn *Te Deum laudamus*.

<sup>1</sup> For an interesting account of the 'Celestial Hierarchy,' see Milman's *Latin Christianity*, Book XIV. chap. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah vi. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. iv. 2-8.



*To Thee all angels cry aloud: the Heavens, and all the powers therein.*

*To Thee Cherubin, and Seraphin: continually do cry.*

When we attempt to conceive to ourselves this higher form of life, we necessarily impinge upon a difficulty inherent in the subject from its very nature. The human mind can only conceive things under the forms of space and time; nevertheless, when we speak of *eternal* life, we really mean a life which is outside the conditions of time; but the moment we attempt to describe this eternal life we of necessity submit it—conventionally, at least—to those very conditions, from which by hypothesis it is free. Thus, even in the case of the life of God we speak of Him as ‘living for ever and ever;’ we cannot conceive the life of God as being anything else—though we know that it is, in reality, essentially different—than a life like our own, which, however, does not come to an end as our life does. And so we sometimes use the term immortal or deathless, as equivalent to eternal, which in reality it is not. The picture of heaven which we have in the book of Revelation is all painted upon this principle. The worship of God below, which is apt to become wearisome if long continued, in consequence of human infirmity, is represented in Heaven as unceasing. *They rest not day and night.*<sup>1</sup> It is a picture—only a picture, and a very striking one—full of joy and comfort for those who can see it in the right light, but open to profane and disparaging remarks from those who choose to regard things spiritual with a simply material eye, and according to material rules. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things.*<sup>2</sup>

There is, however, a mode of considering the great subject of eternal life, which lifts it at once out of all conditions of time, and to which for several reasons it is important that attention should be directed. The prime reason is that it depends upon words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. On a very

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.



solemn occasion, namely, shortly before His Passion, we read that *Jesus lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.*<sup>1</sup> It is impossible not to give a principal place to this utterance in discussing the meaning of eternal life, and the foundation upon which the belief in eternal life rests.<sup>2</sup>

The late Professor Maurice was very fond of dwelling upon these words of our Lord. In one place he writes: 'He did not say, "Men obtain eternal life by knowing God;" but *This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.* The knowledge does not procure the life, but the knowledge constitutes the life.' And then occurs the following striking passage:

We fancy we attach a distinct meaning to these words, Eternal Life; they are such precious and wonderful words that everyone tries to form some notion of them. But surely if there is any subject on which we want a guide—an infallible guide—it is on this. We feel that we are under a law of change and succession, that we live in days, and months, and years. We feel also that we have to do with that which is not changeable, which cannot be represented by any divisions of time. A long life, the poet says, may be curdled into an hour. Every great and serious event of our lives has taught us that this is so. We experience the bitter vanity and emptiness of chronology as a measure of suffering, of thought, of hope, of love. All these belong to another state of things. We perceive that Scripture is speaking to us of that state of things; that it is educating

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> The words of the Collect for Morning Prayer may also be quoted: 'O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, *in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life.*' So likewise the Collect for the Feast of St. Philip and St. James: 'O Almighty God, *whom truly to know is everlasting life.*' The former collect comes through the Sarum Breviary from the Sacramentary of Gelasius, and runs in the Latin thus: *Deus auctor pacis et amator, quem nosse vivere*: where it will be observed that the phrase *eternal life* does not occur, and the simple *knowledge* of God is identified with *life*.

us into the apprehension of it. The more we attend to the New Testament, the more we find to confirm the witness of our reason, that eternity is not a lengthening out or continuation of time; that they are generically different: as St. Paul so beautifully expresses it, *that which we see is temporal, that which we do not see is eternal*. The spiritual world—we are obliged to confess it in a thousand ways—is not subject to temporal conditions.<sup>1</sup>

‘The knowledge does not procure the life, but the knowledge constitutes the life’—this is the thought which runs throughout the preceding quotation, and through other parts of Professor Maurice’s writings. It is a valuable thought; it tends to do away with low and contracted notions of a certain degree of blissful existence in the future being the result of certain knowledge or faith in the present. But may not the distinction between what *procures* and what *constitutes* be pressed too far, and made to seem greater than it really is? Take the motto, *Union is strength*. A person wishing to impress this truth might say, ‘Union does not procure strength; it constitutes strength.’ Yes: but it constitutes it just because it procures it. The word *is* may often be taken as an emphatic synonym for *begets, produces, procures*. Why should not the same principle hold when we say, The knowledge of God *is* eternal life? Or take another familiar maxim: *Knowledge is power*. Is not this a forcible mode of declaring that knowledge is a source of power to him who possesses it? The meaning is not that knowledge and power are synonymous terms; that knowledge can be regarded as the sufficient definition of power; but only that knowledge is so certain a cause, origin, root, producer of power, that you may say that it really *is* power, or constitutes it. The highest example of all may be found in St. John’s assertion, that *God is Love*; by which supreme phrase it is manifestly intended to assert, that love so necessarily flows from God, so characterises all His doings, is so completely the rule of His operations, that the intimate connection between the loving Father and the fatherly love manifested by Him can best be described by asserting their identity.

<sup>1</sup> *Theological Essays*, p. 422.

But whether we regard our Lord's language as declaring that the knowledge of God and of Himself *constitutes* eternal life, or *produces* it, it is manifest that either way His language tends to liberate eternal life (so to speak) from the conditions of time. The language seems to imply that the true conception of eternal life involves such an intimate communion with God, resulting from the knowledge of Him through the manifestation of Christ, as shall lead to a participation of the Divine nature and of God's own eternity. *Because I live*, said the Lord to His disciples, *ye shall live also*:<sup>1</sup> because God lives, they who know Him live also: the great privilege of eternal life is to live in God, to be *partakers of the Divine nature*,<sup>2</sup> to see Him as He is,<sup>3</sup> to be *conformed to the image of His Son*.<sup>4</sup> The teaching of the Lord and of His Apostles seems to supply a solid basis for regarding 'the life everlasting,' taken in this sense, as a rightful article of the Christian Creed.

3. We pass on to another view of the subject, which may not be omitted in discussing the concluding article of the Creed.

Eternal or everlasting *life* seems to suggest the thought of eternal or everlasting *death*. If we regard life as a thing of time, which our present lives undoubtedly and emphatically are, then it would seem that death, as the negation or absence of life, cannot be eternal or everlasting, because it is the mere ceasing to live, and the cessation cannot occupy time. But if we regard *eternal life* as independent of time and as representing the existence of the soul in union with God, then to speak of *eternal death* may be possible in the sense of eternal exclusion from the presence of God. We do not find the phrase in Holy Scripture; but it has the high authority of the Church Catechism, in which the child is instructed to say that in the Lord's Prayer it desires of God, amongst other boons, 'that He will keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy and from *everlasting death*.' This phraseology is manifestly intended as an explanation of the concluding petitions, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*—

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 19.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Peter i. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. viii. 29.

or from *the Evil One*, as the revised version renders the phrase. In like manner, in the Service for the Burial of the Dead, we find the phrase, 'Deliver us not into the bitter pains of *eternal death*.' Theological writers have followed the example; and, perhaps, having the authority of the Book of Common Prayer and of the Catechism, they are justified in doing so. Nevertheless, the absence of Scriptural precedent ought not to be forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

I have already quoted from Professor Maurice on the subject of eternal life: I will again refer to him on the subject of eternal death. 'I have spoken,' he writes, 'of eternal life; what is eternal death? Dare we think of it? Must we not try in some way to evade the consideration of it—to explain away the words of Scripture, which suggest it to us?' Then, after some pages of discussion, occurs the following fine passage:

What then is death eternal, but to be without God? What is that infinite dread which rises upon my mind, which I cannot banish from me, when I think of my own godlessness and lovelessness—that I may become wholly separated from love; become wholly immersed in selfishness and hatred? What dread can I have—ought I to have—besides this? What other can equal this? Mix up with this the consideration of days and years and milleniums, you add nothing either to my comfort or to my fears. All you do is to withdraw me from the real cause of my misery, which is my separation from the source of life and peace; from the hope which must come to me in one place or another, if I can again believe in God's love, and cast myself upon it.<sup>2</sup>

Language of this kind undoubtedly impresses a vivid sense of the opposite of eternal life, whatever that opposite may be:

<sup>1</sup> The sentences in the Service for the Burial of the Dead, 'In the midst of life, &c.,' are taken from the Lenten antiphon to the *Magnificat* in the Salisbury Use; but the phrase 'eternal death' does not occur: the refrain of each verse is *Amaræ mortis ne tradas nos*. St Augustine uses the phrase, 'Non te in æternum tenebit vinculum peccati; quia mortem tuam æternam occidit mors temporalis Domini tui.'—*In Joan. Evang. Tract. III.* Again: 'Mortem æternam, quæ secunda mors appellatur.'—*De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione*, Lib. I. The expression *mors æterna* occurs in classical Latin; but I apprehend that the meaning is equivalent to 'endless sleep.'

<sup>2</sup> *Theological Essays*, p. 437.



and because it is so natural to turn from the thought of eternal life to that of eternal death, therefore it is a point to be remarked upon that no intimation is given concerning this latter, or concerning the need of believing it, in the Apostles' Creed. The words are, 'I believe . . . the life everlasting:' there is nothing said concerning believing in everlasting death. This is the more notable when we observe the manner in which the article is treated by some of the most notable theologians who have expounded it. Barrow, for example, writes as follows:

The immediate consequence of the resurrection, common to just and unjust, is (as we have it in the catalogue of fundamental doctrines, set down by the Apostle to the Hebrews) κρίμα αἰώνιον, that judgment or doom by which the eternal state of every person is determined; accordingly *every man must bear the things done in the body according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or evil*. Now this state, generally taken, (as respecting both the righteous and the blessed, the wicked and miserable,) as it doth suppose a perpetual duration in being and sense, so it may be called *everlasting life*; although life . . . is used to denote peculiarly the blessed state; as death . . . is also used to signify the condition of the damned.<sup>1</sup>

So that Barrow regards the concluding article of the Creed as equivalent to this: 'I believe in everlasting life and everlasting death, in the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation, in the eternal judgment or doom.' In like manner Bishop Pearson in summing up the full meaning of the concluding article of the Creed, expresses himself thus:

I do fully and freely assent unto this, as unto a most necessary and infallible truth, that the unjust after their resurrection and condemnation shall be tormented for their sins in hell, and shall so be continued in torments for ever, so as neither the justice of God shall ever cease to inflict them, nor the persons of the wicked cease to subsist and suffer them; and that the just after their resurrection and absolution shall, as the blessed of the Father, obtain the inheritance, and as the servants of God enter into their Master's joy, freed from

<sup>1</sup> Barrow, vol. vi. p. 428.



all possibility of death, sin and sorrow, filled with all conceivable and inconceivable fulness of happiness, confirmed in an absolute security of an eternal enjoyment, and so they shall continue with God and with the Lamb for evermore. And thus I believe *the life everlasting*.<sup>1</sup>

Let it be observed that in this exposition of the meaning of belief concerning the life everlasting, the very head and front of the statement is a declaration of the awful consequences of unrepented and unforgiven sin: every emphasis is given by the declaration, that the torments of the unjust shall so continue that neither the justice of God shall cease to inflict them, nor the persons of the unjust cease to suffer them. There is here presented beyond all doubt a most doleful picture. And it is not till this picture has been exhibited, that we come to a declaration of the condition of the just. One might think that at least the order should have been inverted, so that in explaining the meaning of belief concerning life we should first have heard what life is and to whom it is given, and then have been told what is meant by the loss of life and what is the condition of those who lose it. Let me give a simple illustration of what I mean. Suppose a youth is entitled, on coming of age, to a fine estate and a large fortune, and suppose that he is asked to express his opinion or belief concerning the future of himself and his estate. It would be strange if he commenced the declaration of his belief with an anticipation of painful circumstances which might exist in connection with the estate and those living upon it, or with any dangers to himself which might follow from his being the heir to such a possession. It might be supposed that the joy arising from his bright prospects would take precedence of all other considerations and thoughts. 'I believe,' he might say, 'in my heart that I have a grand and useful future before me.' And so the last words of the Creed appear to be intended to express unlimited joy and exultation and thankfulness, not sad thoughts concerning the future, even if (as is not denied) there be an opening for sad thoughts.

<sup>1</sup> *Pearson on the Creed*, vol. i. p. 672.

This opinion will be strengthened by a comparison of the article with the corresponding passage in the Nicene Creed. The language of that symbol is, 'I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.' The phrase 'look for' appears to express waiting with desire, or with joyful anticipation. It is true that the original word, *προσδοκάω*, means expectation either in joy or in fear; but if we may in any degree regard the English version, adopted by the English Church, as a commentary upon the original, the choice of such a phrase as 'look for' would be conclusive in favour of joy rather than fear, as the governing emotion of him who rehearses the Creed.

The same conclusion will be arrived at, if we take the Tridentine Catechism as our guide. It is only right to say that much profit may be gathered from this little book; where questions of controversy between Rome and other portions of the Church are out of the way, there is in it abundance of useful teaching for parish priests of all churches. It may be noted, then, that whereas twelve questions are propounded upon this article as guides to the parish priest in teaching his flock, every one of them dwells upon the bliss, and not one of them on the woes, of the future condition of human souls: '*Admonendi sunt fideles, his vocibus vitam æternam, non magis perpetuitatem vitæ, cui etiam dæmones sceleratique homines addicti sunt, quam in perpetuitate beatitudinem, quæ beatorum desiderium expleat, significari.*'<sup>1</sup> According to this commentary, the *life everlasting* would point to that which theologians describe as the *beatific vision*: according to those words of the prophet, *thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.*<sup>2</sup>

In truth, the question of the judgment to come has been already dealt with under another article: 'From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.' He who rehearses the Creed, in repeating this article expresses his belief that there will be a judgment of all men according to their works: of course he includes himself in the number of all men, and he acknowledges *the terror of the Lord*<sup>3</sup> with regard to himself as emphatically as he does with regard to his fellow-men: he

<sup>1</sup> Quæstio ii. : *Quid hic per vitam æternam significetur.*

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 11.

looks for this judgment as a great fact in the future of mankind : and so far as he is himself personally concerned, he acknowledges his own responsibility to the great Judge of quick and dead, and implies his determination to flee from the wrath to come. At this point he is justified by the Creed in leaving his profession of faith with regard to this most solemn subject : and it would seem to be a mistake and a misfortune, to permit the dark shadow of a sentence of condemnation upon the impenitent to fall upon the bright expression of faith in the life everlasting with which the Creed concludes.

If it be thought remarkable that more emphatic reference should not be made in the Creed to that awful future, which has already been spoken of under the phrase 'eternal death,' two observations may be made. First, it seems to be the very principle of the Creed to express belief concerning the positive verities which tend to the life and salvation and joy of the soul, rather than the opposites of those verities. To take a conspicuous example : there is no article of the Creed which treats of the existence of the devil. Many statements concerning Satan and his power are to be found in Holy Scripture, but none in the Creed.

I have seen a book, writes Archbishop Whately, in which the author reports of some acquaintance of his, that, on being asked by some one whether he did not believe in the devil, he answered, 'Oh no ! I believe in God. Don't you ?' This seems to be about as wise as if on being asked, 'Do you not believe in the existence of sickness ?' he had replied, 'Oh no ! I believe in health. Don't you ?'<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to suppose that Archbishop Whately did not see the point of the repartee, which is both real and acute.

Few persons can look upon the world and its history, and upon their own experience, without being moved to believe in the existence of an evil power or evil spirit : but the kind of belief thus called forth is of a totally different kind from that living belief which we describe as faith in God. It would add nothing to the value of the Creed to say in it that we believe there is a spiritual power of evil ; while to say that we believe

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Scripture Revelations Respecting Good and Evil Angels*, p. 67.

*in* that power would be intolerable, and unworthy of any person who professes belief *in* the Father, *in* the Son, and *in* the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, it should be remembered that the Apostles' Creed by no means professes to contain all things which it is right and well that Christians should believe. It has already been noted that no reference is made to a large portion of our Lord's history, to His teaching, His parables, His miracles. It may be added that there are large departments of theology which are in like manner omitted. Nothing is said concerning Holy Scripture, nothing concerning inspiration, nothing concerning the efficacy of prayer, nothing concerning the Holy Eucharist.<sup>1</sup> It contains the elements, the first principles, the root out of which Christian theology grows, the main propositions of which Christian theology is the expansion. Hence it is no derogation from the doctrine of the future world that only one side of it, and that the side of brightness and hope and joy and communion with God, is chiefly enforced. The darker side may well be left out of special consideration, at a time when a man or a child is declaring his belief in God who made him, in the Son who redeemed him, and in the Holy Ghost who sanctifies him. Everlasting *life* is the crown and climax of a Creed suitable to the needs of the human soul: that must not be omitted: everlasting *death* very well may.

This feature of the Apostles' Creed fits in admirably with that which is described as the character of the preaching of our Lord, and with the commission given by Him to His Apostles and those who should succeed them. Christ came to preach a Gospel, or to bring glad tidings from God to man; and it was emphatically to preach a Gospel or to carry everywhere glad tidings, that He ordained those who followed Him. If we examine the record of the Lord's teaching as given by the Evangelists, we cannot but perceive that it was of a kind calculated to comfort and soothe and attract, especially as it was illustrated by a running comment of acts of benevolence and self-sacrifice. There are a few occasions, and only a few, upon which a severe shadow is permitted to fall upon the bright

<sup>1</sup> This subject is explained more fully in the address 'To the Reader,' at the commencement of this volume.



page of His teaching. Truth must, of course, have its severe side, and the consequences of unrepented sin must be sad and solemn: but the general tone and current of the teaching of Christ may be said to be concentrated in those notable words: *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.*<sup>1</sup> Note likewise those emphatic words which He spoke concerning the manner in which He would assert His power over mankind: *I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.*<sup>2</sup> The Cross was to have an attractive power, drawing men towards itself by the cords of love. It seems manifest also that the teaching of the Lord produced the impression upon the minds of those who heard it, that it really was a Gospel: they *wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth*:<sup>3</sup> they testified that *He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*:<sup>4</sup> those who disliked His teaching were men, who took their stand on their own righteousness and resented the exposure of their hypocrisy. What is more, the general impression which has been left upon the conscience of the world by the teaching of Christ is, that, whether Divine or human, His words were very gentle and loving words. And undoubtedly the same spirit was impressed upon His Apostles. Nothing can be more notable in the letters which have come down to us than their loving tone, than the manner in which they enforce, under the light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Ghost, the joyful teaching which the Lord Himself gave. In them too there is an occasional hint at dark things behind the scene: they are aware of a solemn future, but they seldom contain it in words: what they do is to magnify and proclaim the great victory over Satan and sin won through the Cross and Passion of Christ, and to exhort all Christians to hold fast to Him and to claim a share in His victory.

Consequently, it may be maintained that the Apostles' Creed is a faithful synopsis of the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles, and a most suitable formula of admission into the

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xi. 28-30.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xii. 32.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke iv. 22.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. vii. 29.



Christian Church, even if we decline to see in its concluding article a declaration such as Bishop Pearson finds in it, and recognise only an exulting, thankful expression of Christian joy and hope. If it be asked, what is the foundation of this joy and hope? the answer may be given that it is Christ Himself. Life—life everlasting, life in the presence of God—is exactly that which Christ came to reveal and to make possible. This article of the Creed may be regarded as one of the main marks of distinction between the religion, which Christ has established in and by His Church, and all other religions. In the light of this article we see the meaning of such words as those which we find in the opening of St. John's Gospel: *In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.*<sup>1</sup> Again: *As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.*<sup>2</sup> Again: *Because I live, ye shall live also.*<sup>3</sup> And once more: *God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.*<sup>4</sup> In fact, as the Creed leads up to and culminates in the words 'the life everlasting,' so the whole New Testament may be described as 'the Book of Everlasting Life;' or, to put the same thing in a somewhat different way, the New Testament is the history of the Incarnation; the end and meaning of the Incarnation are the union of God and man; the result of this union is the communication to man of the life of God, which in the very nature of things must be life everlasting.

4. The concluding words of the Creed may be of great use in assisting us to deal with those difficult questions, which can be raised with regard to the condition and occupations of the blessed in the world to come. The assistance they give is of a negative kind, but nevertheless most valuable. The mere doctrine of the immortality of the soul finds its highest expression in the query of the Emperor Hadrian:

*Animula vagula, blandula,  
Hospes comesque corporis,  
Quæ nunc abibis in loca?*

and if we attempt to formulate occupations for the departed, or to picture their joys, we run the risk of materialistic concep-

<sup>1</sup> St. John. i. 4.    <sup>2</sup> St. John v. 26.    <sup>3</sup> St. John xiv. 19.    <sup>4</sup> 1 John v. 11.

tions from which refined thought and good taste shrink. But the Apostles' Creed holds before our minds the simple thought of *life*. We know what a boon life is, even under the restrictions of this material world. We know how men love it, how they cling to it, even under the most discouraging conditions. We know what powers of action in all departments of thought and deed are wrapped up in that mysterious thing which we call life. What must life be in the more immediate presence of God? What limits shall we assign to its activity and its powers of doing? If the life of angels be one of activity, why not that of the spirits of men made perfect? What shall be the value attached to it? What shall be the joy of those who possess it? These questions, perhaps, do not admit of any answer more definite than this, namely, that life everlasting will be life in the immediate presence of God and of intimate communion with Him. Or we may quote the language of St. John: *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.*<sup>1</sup>

Resting on the Incarnation of Him who is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*,<sup>2</sup> of Him who came to *bring life and immortality to light*,<sup>3</sup> of Him who lived and died and *is alive for ever more, and has the keys of hell and of death*<sup>4</sup>—resting on this great truth and all that it involves and implies, we believe *thus* in the life everlasting.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 2.    <sup>2</sup> St. John xiv. 6.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. i. 10.    <sup>4</sup> Rev. i. 18.

<sup>5</sup> A distinguished friend of mine travelling years ago in a railway carriage with the famous Faraday, and conversing with him on the subject of a future life, asked him, 'Have you formed any distinct opinion on the subject?' Faraday replied with unspeakable solemnity, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him!' Then, after a pause, he added with the deepest feeling, 'I shall be with Christ!'

This is the testimony of one of the scientific leaders of the century. I cannot refrain from adding that of Robert Browning, one of our leaders in another department of thought. I am indebted for the letter which follows to a newspaper article which was published soon after his death. It was written by him in 1876 to a lady, who, believing herself to be dying, wrote to thank him for the help she had derived from his poems, mentioning particularly 'Rabbi ben Ezra' and 'Abt Vogler,' and giving expression to the deep satisfaction of her mind that one so highly gifted with genius should hold, as Browning held, to

5. The Creed terminates with the word *Amen*, the same word as that with which we conclude all our prayers. The child is taught in the Catechism to say with reference to the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, 'This I trust He will do of His mercy and goodness, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore I say, Amen, So be it.' St. Paul speaks of saying *Amen at giving of thanks*.<sup>1</sup> And in the conclusion of the Book of Holy Scripture, in response to the promise of the Lord, *Surely I come quickly*, St. John uses the words, *Amen*. *Even so, come, Lord Jesus*.<sup>2</sup> All which uses of the word *Amen* may be adduced as strengthening the view which has been given of the concluding article of the Creed, and perhaps it may be said of all the articles as discussed in this volume. It is conceived by the writer, and he wishes to impress the conception upon the

the great truths of our religion, and to a belief in the glorious unfolding and crowning of life in the world beyond the grave. 'Dear friend,—It would ill become me to waste a word on my own feelings, except inasmuch as they can be common to us both in such a situation as you describe yours to be—and which, by sympathy, I can make mine by the anticipation of a few years at most. It is a great thing—the greatest—that a human being should have passed the probation of life, and sum up its experience in a witness to the power and love of God. I dare congratulate you. All the help I can offer, in my poor degree, is the assurance that I see ever more reason to hold by the same hope—and that by no means in ignorance of what has been advanced to the contrary; and for your sake I would wish it to be true that I had so much of "genius" as to permit the testimony of an especially privileged insight to come in aid of the ordinary argument. For I know I myself have been aware of the communication of something more subtle than a ratiocinative process, when the convictions of "genius" have thrilled my soul to its depths, as when Napoleon, shutting up the New Testament, said of Christ, "Do you know that I am an understander of men? Well, He was no man!" ("Savez-vous que je me connais en hommes? Eh bien, celui-là ne fut pas un homme.") Or as when Charles Lamb, in a gay fancy with some friends as to how he and they would feel if the greatest of the dead were to appear suddenly in flesh and blood once more—on the final suggestion, "And if Christ entered this room?" changed his manner at once, and stuttered out, as his manner was when moved, "You see—if Shakespeare entered, we should all rise; if *He* appeared, we must kneel." Or, not to multiply instances—as when Dante wrote what I will transcribe from my wife's Testament—wherein I recorded it fourteen years ago—"Thus I believe, thus I affirm, thus I am certain it is, that from this life I shall pass to another better—there, where the lady lives of whom my soul was enamoured." Dear friend, I may have wearied you in spite of your good will. God bless you, sustain, and receive you! Reciprocate this blessing with yours affectionately,

'ROBERT BROWNING.'

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxii. 20.

reader, that, speaking generally, the Apostles' Creed is an epitome of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; that it is a declaration of Divine love towards mankind, as manifested first in creation, then in redemption, and lastly in sanctification; that it is substantially a presentation of the great truth of the Incarnation; that it contains the grounds upon which men may claim communion with God in this life, and upon which they may hope for closer communion with Him in the life to come; and that, as the Creed commences with the recognition of God as our Creator, the giver of our natural life, so it appropriately concludes with the recognition of the highest and best gift which even God can bestow, namely, life everlasting, the unspeakable joy of His own beatific presence. If this be a true and just conception of the Creed, the rehearsal of its articles may be suitably followed by the utterance of a solemn *Amen*; and he who rehearses them may regard his *Amen* as expressing the prayer, that he may be permitted to share in that life everlasting with which the Creed concludes.

Handel's *Messiah* terminates with an *Amen* chorus. It has sometimes occurred to me to think, that this great oratorio is a Creed, and that it illustrates in an admirable manner the Creeds of the Christian Church. It sets forth, with almost unequalled inspiration, the great truths of the Gospel; it preaches the Incarnation with a force and pathos quite unparalleled; and it leads up, like the Apostles' Creed, to the life everlasting, which is pictured by the Hallelujah Chorus, and the declaration that *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever*,<sup>1</sup> *King of kings and Lord of lords*.<sup>2</sup> At the close of the oratorio every devout person must feel, that *Amen* ought to be said by each heart which the sacred words of the oratorio and Handel's music have moved; and probably it will also be felt that Handel's mode of saying it is not too full or too majestic. If it be true, as suggested, that the *Messiah* is really a Creed, then the *Amen* chorus at its conclusion may suggest the reason why the Apostles' Creed concludes with an *Amen*, and the spirit in which that *Amen* should be said.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xix. 16.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CONCLUSION

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*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations [make disciples of all the nations, R.V.], baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world—ST. MATT. xxviii. 19, 20*



# NICENE (CONSTANTINOPLE)

A.D. 381.

The parts without brackets represent the Nicene Creed, as put forth by the Council of Constantinople.

1. Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἓνα Θεὸν Πατέρα παντοκράτορα,  
ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς,  
ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀορατῶν.
2. Καὶ εἰς ἓνα Κύριον, Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν,  
τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ,  
τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων,  
[Deum de Deo,]  
Φῶς ἐκ Φωτὸς,  
Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ,  
γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα,  
ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί·  
δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο·
3. Τὸν, δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους  
καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν,  
κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν  
καὶ σαρκωθέντα,  
ἐκ Πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς Παρθένου,  
καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα·
4. Σταυρωθέντα τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου,  
καὶ παθόντα, καὶ ταφέντα·
5. καὶ ἀνάσταντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ κατὰ τὰς γραφάς·
6. καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς·  
καὶ καθεζόμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Πατρὸς·
7. Καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης  
κρίναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς·  
οὗ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος·
8. Καὶ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον,  
τὸ Κύριον,  
καὶ τὸ ζωοποιόν,  
τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς [Filioque] ἐκπορευόμενον,  
τὸ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ  
συμπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον,  
τὸ λαλήσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν·
9. Εἰς μίαν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν·
10. Ὁμολογοῦμεν ἓν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν·
11. Προσδοκῶμεν ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν,  
12. Καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## CONCLUSION.

WE have now examined each article of the Apostles' Creed. The examination has had reference, not so much to the theological force and meaning of the articles, though of course this has been the case to some extent, as to the grounds of their credibility. The inquirers whose mental and spiritual needs have been the chief care of the writer, have not been those who having cordially accepted the Apostles' Creed as their religious guide need further exposition and instruction, but rather those who hesitate to accept the guidance and yet do not absolutely and resolutely reject it. England, in the present age, unless the writer is immensely mistaken with regard to the signs of the times, has within her limits many persons thus situated. And for all mental and spiritual purposes the word England must extend far beyond mere insular limits, and must embrace the vast English-speaking population which is so wonderfully scattered over the whole world. It cannot be said with truth that England is an unbelieving nation: doubtless unbelief abounds, as perhaps it never has before, and reasons why this should be so are not far to seek: but the proofs of the existence of something quite different from a general desertion of the ground, upon which our fathers stood with reference to religious belief, are abundant and irrefragable. Perhaps it may be suggested with some confidence that the explanation of the present position of England, so far as a human explanation can be assigned, is to be found in the course adopted by our forefathers in the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century. The grand principle of reformation adopted at that critical epoch may be described as that of holding on to the old and equally accepting the new: the wisest men of those days

saw that a great religious crisis had arrived, that great changes of thought had taken place, that in order to save the faith many things which seemed bound up with the current form of religion must be swept away. It needed much wisdom and judgment to introduce reform and at the same time to avoid anarchy; probably mistakes were made; the powers of evil were on the watch to introduce mischief; but the Divine treasure was saved, and when the troubles had subsided, after more than a century of disturbance, England was found in possession of her old Church, her old worship, her old Creeds, and was also found free from her old superstitions.

Religious and political strife and controversy have introduced from time to time all kinds of questions in connection with the great event in our history, which we call the English Reformation; but if we strive to go to the root of the matter and to ascertain the principles which lie close to that root, may it not be said that the Reformation, like the Creed, was based upon those three foundations with which the reader of this volume will have become familiar, Reason, History, and Faith? There was no attempt to get rid of mystery, and of all that region of religious thought to which faith is the key; there was no notion of ignoring history, and commencing a new era without historical antecedents; and there was an open and honest appeal to the reason of men, as to the course which it behoved the Church and nation to adopt. A continuous unbroken ministry, with services in a language understood by the people and with abundance of teaching, an English Bible and an English Prayer Book—these were the solid grounds upon which the English mind and character of the later centuries have been built. And though the facts to which reference has been made may not account for all phenomena, they do seem to have had much influence in producing the spiritual condition of English-speaking people which is found in the present day.

I imagine that the number amongst us is very great of those who have an hereditary bias towards religious belief, who have no sympathy with scurrilous attacks upon the Lord Jesus, who shrink from the atheistic position, and who yet find themselves puzzled by the doubts thrown in modern times upon the

articles of the Christian Creed. Whether the number be small or great, this is the class of persons who have been chiefly in the mind of the writer of this book. With them may be associated others, who cannot perhaps be described as puzzled, but who repeat the Apostles' Creed with a certain amount of fear and trembling, as though they were treading on delicate ground which might possibly give way under their feet. These also the writer has had in mind, and he feels convinced that the persons described are by no means few or unworthy of consideration. How can there be any doubt upon this question? The perusal of English periodical literature is sufficient to indicate the direction from which the wind is blowing. This literature is a tolerably safe criterion. It shews what men are thinking about, what subjects are interesting to English minds. Does not the tone of much of the literature in question go to prove, that the foundations of the Creed constitute a subject of anxious interest to not a few amongst us at this epoch?

If I may be pardoned for making a confession, it has been my own participation—not very large, perhaps, compared with that of some writers, but to myself intensely interesting—in periodical literature, which has chiefly lead to the conception and execution of this volume. Having been moved from time to time to contribute to the periodical press articles bearing, directly or indirectly, upon the Christian Creed in its relation to human knowledge, I have found that to not a few minds the aspect which the subject has presented to myself, and which I have endeavoured to represent to others, has appeared to be bright and helpful. There is perhaps no feeling more permanently gratifying, than that which arises from the persuasion, that one has been able to assist a brother in dealing with the spiritual problems and puzzles which this problematical and puzzling life presents to almost all, and which press upon some minds with painful weight. Having been assured that in certain cases my occasional writings have given real help, I conceived the plan of dealing more systematically with the whole question of the foundations of the Creed, and the present volume is the result.

To pass away, however, from this somewhat personal matter

let it be said in general that the result to which consideration has brought my own mind, and which the composition of this volume has much confirmed, is this, that there is no real difficulty with regard to the articles of the Apostles' Creed, save that which attaches to the history of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not say that there is no kind of difficulty connected with a belief in God, such as the first article asserts: we have seen that John Stuart Mill has declared such belief to be logically untenable: this is a difficulty in itself: and doubtless there is, as a matter of fact, much unbelief with regard to an Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth. Still I am disposed to think that the practical difficulty of belief in God is not great to the large majority of minds: the first tendency, so to speak, is in the direction of belief; the human instinct is on that side; the simple man probably regards the being of God as a self-evident, undeniable proposition; it is only acute minds like that of John Stuart Mill, or minds which have been led to the conclusion by complicated courses of reasoning, to which the belief in the being of God appears untenable.

So also, though in a different way and on other grounds, there would seem to be nothing in the expression of belief in the Holy Ghost, which is calculated to present obvious difficulty to an ordinary mind. It is not asserted that the doctrine, expressed in all the clean cut clearness of the Athanasian Creed, may not demand much examination and mental digestion before it is accepted in its fulness; but it may be asserted with some confidence, that the dogma, as proposed to a child in the Catechism, of a Holy Spirit who sanctifies the hearts and lives of those who receive Him and cherish His presence, is one which easily makes its way into the mind, and that it does not usually find any arguments offered by human reason, tending in any effectual manner to bar its entrance.

Similar remarks may be made concerning those articles of the Creed which do not immediately touch any one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, such as the doctrines of the Resurrection and of Everlasting Life.

It is when we come to the articles which specially deal with the history of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are brought face



to face with manifest and undeniable difficulties. Here we have a distinct assertion of contact between the natural and the supernatural. It is not the supernatural in itself that constitutes the difficulty. God is supernatural: that is the very essence of His being: He is above nature and beyond nature, because He is the author, the ground, and the cause of nature: nature exists by Him and in Him. But I feel no difficulty in conceiving His existence, and saying that I believe in it. Even the agnostic cannot assail me on this point; because I do not say that I *know God*, but only that I fully *believe* that He exists. So also the Holy Ghost is confessedly supernatural; but like the Father He is altogether so; He lives and moves and has His being in a region beyond nature; and though it is quite possible flippantly to deny His existence, as you may deny (if you will) the existence of everything which you cannot see or hear or feel, still you cannot find fault with those who say that they believe in Him, on the ground that such belief is in itself unreasonable. There may and will be difficulties connected with belief in the supernatural; but so long as the object of belief is entirely confined to the supernatural region, it cannot involve that kind of difficulty, which belongs to dogmas connected partly with the seen and partly with the unseen world.

To take a simple illustration. Do you believe in ghosts? In a certain sense the large majority of mankind do believe in them. A ghost is only a synonym for a spirit: and that there is such an essence as the human spirit is an almost universal belief: we speak of the *spirit returning to God who gave it*,<sup>1</sup> of 'the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, being in joy and felicity,' of the essential difference between the spirit of a man and the spirit of a beast, and so forth. When we thus speak no difficulty arises; in most companies there would be no difference of opinion. But when the question is asked, Do you believe in ghosts? or, Do you believe in spirits? the meaning is, Do you believe that ghosts or spirits can be made manifest to human senses? can they be seen or heard? have they ever been seen or heard?

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. xii. 7.

Here is a question of a totally different kind from that which applies to abstract spiritual existence ; and the difficulty of the question as thus intended, and the difference of the answers which will be made by different persons, depend upon the question of the possibility of the contact of two different orders of life. The *a priori* argument is all against belief in ghosts and not for it: a *spirit* seems to imply invisibility: it is the negation of what is material: it is the antithesis of *body*: and though it would be unwise to assert confidently, that no ghost or spirit had ever been made manifest to living men through their senses, it must be freely admitted that any such assertion has great antecedent improbability with which to contend, and that it will require for its reception a large amount of proof. In the face of the alleged instances of supernatural appearances it may be difficult to disclaim all belief in ghosts: it may be still more difficult to profess belief.

Now the history of our Lord Jesus Christ does undeniably touch upon both the seen and the unseen world. It is the history of a man ; but of a man, who, according to all that we read of Him, claimed to be infinitely more, and for whom His disciples have ever consistently urged this claim. It is the history of a person alleged to be both human and Divine ; both natural and supernatural ; the object of sight and also the object of faith. This is the essential difficulty of the Christian problem, regarded as one for the consideration of the reason of man. Consequently all efforts to rationalise the story of Jesus Christ agree in attempting to confine it to the sphere of the natural. Many of those who as historians or philosophers have discussed the life of the Lord Jesus, have been willing to concede to Him any amount of superiority beyond the rest of mankind, whether intellectual or moral, which His followers would wish to claim, provided only that the concession shall not involve an overstepping of the boundary of the natural region and an intrusion into that which is supernatural. The controversies which arise out of this view of the history of Christ almost compel thinking men to take some interest in them: there are, as we know only too well, controversialists (if they can be so called), or at all events opponents of the Christian faith, who condescend to ribald

ridicule and gross insult when they attempt to teach and enlighten their fellow-men concerning those things which the disciples of Christ hold sacred, who seem animated by that spirit of which Bishop Butler spoke in the last century, when he said that some men behaved themselves as though the folly of the Christian religion were admitted, and they had only to make reprisals for the bondage in which mankind had been held so long.<sup>1</sup> This kind of attack upon the faith should arouse feelings of sorrow, with a repetition of the prayer on the cross, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*<sup>2</sup> The case is very different with regard to those who shrink from any intentional dishonour done to Him, whom they recognise as *fairer than the children of men*,<sup>3</sup> but whose history and doings they conceive themselves bound, by an intellectual necessity, to confine within the limits of what they regard as invariable natural laws.

It can scarcely be doubted, that the tone of thought which manifests itself in this mode of treating the history of Christ has been much strengthened by the spread of physical knowledge, and by the successful investigation of phenomena and the laws which govern them. The progress of knowledge has tended very much to give clear definition to the boundary between the natural and the spiritual. Two hundred years ago judges upon the bench and physicians in their studies

<sup>1</sup> 'It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world. On the contrary, thus much, at least, will be here found, not taken for granted, but proved, that any reasonable man who will thoroughly consider the matter may be as much assured as he is of his own being, that it is not, however, so clear a case that there is nothing in it. There is, I think, strong evidence of its truth; but it is certain no one can, upon principles of reason, be satisfied of the contrary. And the practical consequence to be drawn from this is not attended to by every one who is concerned in it.' (Advertisement prefixed to the first edition of the *Analogy*.)

These words, written rather more than one hundred and fifty years ago by the great author of the *Analogy*, may be a comfort to those who feel despondent concerning the present prospects of the Christian Church.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xlv. 2.

could speak of witchcraft, and of intercourse between Satan and human beings, in a manner which would be simply impossible in the present condition of thought and knowledge:<sup>1</sup> and the condition of things, which makes impossible certain mental conclusions once confessedly possible, may make other conclusions difficult, which were formerly easy. Hence it would be sheer folly to assert, that the mental atmosphere of the nineteenth century does not introduce difficulties with regard to belief of which the earlier ages knew nothing: those ages had their own difficulties, perhaps as great as any that exist now; but they are not our difficulties, or at all events, we have some of our own which did not exist then. All this being so, it seems to me to be worth while to bring this volume to a close with an attempt to concentrate the thoughts of the reader upon Christ, as at once the central light and the central difficulty of the Apostles' Creed. That He is to be so regarded depends upon the fact of His history touching both the natural and the supernatural region, to which attention has already been drawn; this double contact occasions an essential difficulty, but it is at the same time the source of essential light. Man's own being in like manner touches these two regions: man is natural and supernatural; man is flesh and spirit; man is of the earth earthy, and yet he has hopes and aspirations which go far beyond earth; and Christ appears to be just the revelation which man requires, *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*,<sup>2</sup> because with one hand He touches the throne of God in heaven, and with the other He clasps the hand of His poor brother upon earth.

Let us contemplate Jesus Christ for a moment as one of the great characters of history. No reasonable man will deny Him

<sup>1</sup> 'For my part, I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are witches; they that doubt of these, do not only deny them, but spirits; and are obliquely, and upon consequence, a sort not of infidels but atheists. Those that to confute their incredulity desire to see apparitions, shall questionless never behold any, nor have the power to be so much as witches; the devil hath them already in a heresy as capital as witchcraft; and to appear to them were but to convert them.'—*Religio Medici*, p. 78. In the paragraph quoted, and in that which follows it, Sir Thomas Browne writes more to the same purpose.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xiv. 6.



this position. Whether we regard His recorded teaching, or the picture of His life and habits as presented in the Gospels, or His influence upon those who came in contact with Him, or the permanent effect produced by Him and His followers upon the history of the world, it is simply absurd or even impossible to deny to Him a principal place—may we not say absolutely the first place?—in the catalogue of illustrious men. I almost shrink from describing our Lord's place in the human family in such language as that which is here used: but my purpose in doing so is loyal, and *He* knows it. What I desire to effect by expressing myself as I have done, is to remove from the reader's mind for the time all thought of the miraculous; let the picture of Jesus Christ stand before us in simple, absolute, unmixed humanity. *Ecce homo!* and nothing more. Regarding the Lord under such conditions, what thoughts and conclusions present themselves? They cannot be more strikingly and emphatically presented than in words attributed to one of the most remarkable of moderns, whom I have quoted for another purpose in an early part of this volume, the Emperor Napoleon:

I have been accustomed (he is reported to have said) to put before me the examples of Alexander and Cæsar, with the hope of rivalling their exploits, and living in the minds of men for ever. Yet, after all, in what sense does Cæsar, in what sense does Alexander live? Who knows or cares anything about them? At best, nothing but their names is known; for who among the multitude, who hear or who utter their names, knows anything about their lives or their deeds, or attaches to those names any definite idea? Nay, even their names do but flit up and down the world like ghosts, mentioned only on particular occasions, or from accidental associations. Their chief home is the schoolroom; they have a foremost place in boys' grammars and exercise books; they are splendid examples for themes; they form writing-copies. So low is heroic Alexander fallen, so low is imperial Cæsar, 'ut pueris placeant et declamatio fiant.'

But, on the contrary, there is just One Name in the whole world that lives; it is the Name of One who passed His years in obscurity, and who died a malefactor's death. Eighteen hundred years have gone since that time, but still it has its hold upon the human mind.



It has possessed the world and it maintains possession. Amid the most varied nations, under the most diversified circumstances, in the most cultivated, in the rudest races and intellects, in all classes of society, the Owner of that great Name reigns. High and low, rich and poor, acknowledge Him. Millions of souls are conversing with Him, are venturing on His road, are looking for His presence. Palaces, sumptuous, innumerable, are raised to His honour; His image, as in the hour of His deepest humiliation, is triumphantly displayed in the proud city, in the open country, in the corners of streets, on the tops of mountains. It sanctifies the ancestral hall, the closet, and the bedchamber; it is the subject for the exercise of the highest genius in the imitative arts. It is worn next the heart in life, it is held before the failing eyes in death. Here, then, is One who is *not* a mere name, who is not a mere fiction, who is a reality. He is dead and gone, but still He lives—lives as the living, energetic thought of successive generations, as the awful motive-power of a thousand great events. He has done without effort what others with life-long struggles have not done. Can He be less than Divine? Who is He but the Creator Himself; who is sovereign over His own works, towards whom our eyes and hearts turn instinctively, because He is our Father and our God? <sup>1</sup>

The language which has been produced as that of the great French Emperor in his last days, when he had the opportunity of taking a calm survey of his own career and no temptation to act a part, may have been to some extent improved and varnished by those through whose hands it has passed; probably it has; certainly, however, the reflections are such as Napoleon might very well have made, and certainly also, whether he made them or not, the comparison between Jesus Christ and such heroes as Alexander, Caesar, and himself, is just and true. Is there anyone who can for a moment compare the work and the permanent influence of these, or any other of the world's great men, with that of Christ? It is a simple question of fact, a question of history: if a man can be produced comparable in greatness with Jesus Christ, let us know who he is.

Nor is it a question of mere greatness. To frame a true definition of greatness, as applied to human character and deeds, is

<sup>1</sup> The above gives Napoleon's words as quoted by Cardinal Newman in the *Grammar of Assent*, p. 482.

rather difficult. Take Sir Isaac Newton, Shakspeare, and the great Duke of Wellington: which of them is the greatest man? It would be impossible to say, because their regions of action were entirely different: each did what neither of the other two could have done: their achievements are what mathematicians would call *incommensurable*. Hence there is, as I have said, a difficulty in defining greatness; but what is asserted concerning the Lord Jesus Christ is this, that He has influenced the world more permanently and more deeply than any other man whom the world has seen, and in the most remarkable and unexpected manner. He never wrote a line, so far as we know, except once upon the dust of the ground; He never struck a blow in defence of Himself, or of His cause; He was crucified as a malefactor, and if unbelievers are right, there was the end of Him so far as this world is concerned. Yet, as a matter of fact, the declaration of this crucifixion has been one of the chief means of spreading the influence of the Crucified One: the disciples of Christ have gloried in His Cross: the world has derided it: in early ages unbelievers persecuted it: in modern times its conquests have been attributed to other causes: but the result is undeniable: Christ crucified is a King, with a larger dominion and more power and influence than any other conqueror or potentate who ever claimed authority.

Regarded thus, the historical Jesus of Nazareth seems to demand from us something more than a concession—even a full and hearty concession—that He is morally and spiritually the Prince of the human race: like Saul amongst the Israelites, higher by head and shoulders than all His brethren. A story used to be current soon after the publication of Ernest Renan's '*Vie de Jésus*,' that an unbelieving editor of a Parisian newspaper, who had examined the book in order to review it, was led by the examination to declare himself a believer: 'If,' said he, 'all this be true, there must be much truth beyond.' Whether this story represents a real fact or not, it certainly indicates one road by which the foot of the Cross may be reached. For if Jesus Christ be that which the Creed asserts Him to be, the triumph of His Cross, the vitality of His Church, the power of faith in Him to conquer the world, seem

to follow as easy corollaries from the one great fundamental proposition: but this proposition unbelievers deny, and so we are left in the predicament of having unparalleled results to account for, a great victory and regeneration to acknowledge and explain, while the only hypothesis, which (so far as we have been able to form an opinion) makes the results credible, is refused to us.

So that we seem to come to a question of this kind—May it not be true that, after all, the ground taken by the Creed is the simplest explanation of the facts of history? It involves a miracle: no doubt it does: the Creed asserts Jesus Christ to have come into the world in an extraordinary manner, and to have left it in an extraordinary manner, and to have done so because He was the Son of God. Of course if a man of nineteenth-century enlightenment says, 'That is enough for me; I believe in the laws of nature; I do not believe in anything which contravenes those laws'—the Christian's lips are closed. But before we thus cut short the argument, and yield ourselves to the conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth was Jesus of Nazareth and nothing more—His cross like all other bits of wood—His tomb like all other tombs—may it not be well to consider, whether the visit to this world of One who is both Divine and human may not be at least conceivable? whether the heart of man does not crave for something of the kind? whether, considering all the circumstances of the case, such a visit, if supported by strong historical authority, may not be accepted as one of the cardinal facts of humanity?

If a man who leans toward Christian belief—who perhaps has been brought up in the principles of the Church Catechism, but has found his mind perplexed by the results of criticism or the facts of science—whose faith is cast down but not destroyed—if such a man be troubled by the fact that the Creed involves the acceptance of miracles, I would venture respectfully to submit that to absolutely deny the miraculous—that is to say, to deny the possibility of everything which does not conform to the ordinary course of nature—is clearly unphilosophical. To speak of the rules of the ordinary course of nature being applicable to a particular case, implies that all

the circumstances of the particular case in which a miracle is alleged are ordinary, whereas in the case of the Incarnation the circumstances are by hypothesis extraordinary. A visit of God to man, if the Incarnation may be so described, stands by itself: it is not in the course of nature, but distinctly outside that course: and to assert that the birth and death of Him, who is God made man, must be exactly like the birth and death of those whom He calls His brethren, is plainly unwarranted by the premisses. But, having made this observation, and so endeavoured to vindicate the abstract reasonableness of that which the Creed propounds, I would venture to advise Christian inquirers not to lean too much upon the miraculous features of our Lord's history, as (according to the view taken by a certain school of apologists) furnishing proof of His divine character, but rather to reverse the process and to accept the miracles because they believe Him to be divine. Let the Incarnation be the foundation of the miracles, rather than miracles the proof of the Incarnation. It has been already noted<sup>1</sup> that in the Apostolic Epistles the one miraculous event dwelt upon is the resurrection from the dead. No one can easily doubt that St. Paul, as the companion of St. Luke, was acquainted with the fact of the Virgin birth, and certainly St. Peter and St. John knew of the wondrous works or signs which Jesus Christ had done in the days of His flesh: yet they do not habitually dwell upon these truths: they omit them in a manner which has not unnaturally caused some surprise: and though I do not pretend to explain all the motives and reasons which may have led to this result, the conclusion seems to be undeniable, that these miraculous circumstances need not be the most prominent in a Christian's thoughts. Christ must doubtless be the Son of God, God made man, otherwise He is no Christ at all in the sense in which the Church uses the title: but if He is acknowledged to be this, difficulties will disappear, and He will sooner or later be perceived to be all that the Gospels represent Him to have been, all that the Church still believes Him to be.

<sup>1</sup> Page 199. This subject is very fully and strikingly treated in Isaac Taylor's *Restoration of Belief*.



For in reality it is Christ as a living power—as One to whom *all power is given in Heaven and in earth*<sup>1</sup>—that the Church acknowledges and worships. Much is said in modern times concerning *Christianity* — the evidences of Christianity, the power of Christianity, the spread of Christianity and civilisation, and so forth. Nor is there much fault to be found with the word, if rightly used. But it may be well to remark that there is no such word in the New Testament, or in early Church literature. Even the name Christian, which is the basis of the word Christianity, was in early times chiefly a term of reproach, and a name the acknowledgment of which was a pretty sure passport to the lions or the fire. The portion of the long word Christianity which is original and primitive and scriptural is the name Christ; and the more we eschew the word Christianity and cling to the name of Christ, so much the nearer shall we be to Apostolic feeling and primitive practice. For Christ *is* Christianity: this may be said to be the distinction between His religion, His morality, His philosophy, and all others which have been more or less current. His disciples do not preach Christianity; they preach Christ. To know *Him, and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings*,<sup>2</sup> was the climax of St. Paul's ambition, and perhaps the same phraseology may fitly describe the aim of disciples of Christ in all ages.

In connection with this subject may suitably be quoted a passage from the Encyclical Letter of the Anglican Bishops, assembled at Lambeth Palace in 1888. Having referred to 'the wide-spread system of propagandism hostile to the reception of the Bible as a treasury of Divine knowledge,' and to 'doubts which arise from the misapprehension of the due relations between science and revelation,' the Bishops proceed thus:

We recommend to the clergy cautious and industrious treatment of these points of controversy, and most earnestly press upon them the importance of taking, as the central thought of their teaching, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the sacrifice for our sins, as the healer of

<sup>1</sup> St Matt. xxviii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 10.



our sinfulness, the source of all our spiritual life and the revelation to our consciences of the law and motive of all moral virtue. To Him and to His work all the teachings of the Old Testament converge, and from Him all the teachings of the New Testament flow, in spirit, in force, and in form. The work of the Church is the application and extension of the blessings of the Incarnation, and her teaching the development of its doctrinal issues as contained in the Creeds of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

These are weighty words: they place things in their right order. The Incarnation is the great central truth: all other truths are to be accepted in connection with, and in subordination to, this the greatest and most comprehensive truth of all.

There is another view of the subject upon which a few remarks may be suitably offered.

In the event of the Apostles' Creed being rejected as untenable, what is to be put in its place? The answer may be, that we need nothing in its place: that belief in God may take its chance together with all other beliefs, and that in the maturity of the human mind what is wanted is not belief, but knowledge. This kind of answer, however, will not be satisfactory to a large portion of mankind; for the question, What is to be put in the place of the Apostles' Creed? is equivalent to this, What religion is to be adopted, if faith in Jesus Christ be regarded as impossible? A man who rejects the faith may adopt materialistic views; or he may reject the faith as the logical consequence of having first adopted those views; and in connection with the belief that there is nothing in the universe except matter, and that when death comes a man is resolved into the material elements of which his body is composed, he may become a secularist; he may bound his view with the horizon of the seen and temporal, while he denies the reality of the unseen and eternal. But materialism and secularism can scarcely be classified as religions; they are rather philosophical speculations, and are antagonistic to every kind of religion in any ordinary sense of the word. Of course there have been and are religions other than the religion of Christ, which have

<sup>1</sup> *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion* (S.P.C.K.), p. 13.

swayed and do sway the hearts of men : at the present time we witness Hinduism, Buddhism, Parseeism, Mahomedanism, all in more or less activity in certain portions of the world ; but so far as I know there is no probability of any one of these, or of any other ancient religion, supplanting in Europe, or (to be more particular), in England, the religion of Christ. There seem to be only two substitutes actually and practically proposed for the Apostles' Creed, and upon each of these it may be well that some remarks should be offered.

1. First we have what is called the Religion of Humanity. Upon this let us listen to the words of John Stuart Mill :

The value of religion to the individual, both in the past and present, as a source of personal satisfaction and of elevated feelings, is not to be disputed. But it has still to be considered, whether in order to obtain this good, it is necessary to travel beyond the boundaries of the world which we inhabit, or whether the idealisation of an earthly life, the cultivation of a high conception of what *it* may be made, is not capable of supplying a poetry, and, in the best sense of the word, a religion, equally fitted to exalt the feelings, and (with the same aid from education) still better calculated to ennoble the conduct, than any belief respecting the unseen powers.

At the bare suggestion of such a possibility, many will exclaim, that the short duration, the smallness and insignificance of life, if there is no prolongation of it beyond what we see, makes it impossible that great and elevated feelings can connect themselves with anything laid out on so small a scale : that such a conception of life can match with nothing higher than Epicurean feelings, and the Epicurean doctrine, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'

Unquestionably, within certain limits, the maxim of the Epicureans is sound, and applicable to much higher things than eating and drinking. To make the most of the present for all good purposes, those of enjoyment among the rest ; to keep under control those mental dispositions which lead to undue sacrifice of present good for a future which may never arrive ; to cultivate the habit of deriving pleasure from things within our reach, rather than from the too eager pursuit of objects at a distance ; to think all time wasted which is not spent either in personal pleasure or in doing things useful to oneself or others ; these are wise maxims, and the *carpe diem* doctrine, carried thus far, is a rational and legitimate corollary from the shortness of life. But that because life is short we should care for nothing beyond

it, is not a legitimate conclusion; and the supposition, that human beings in general are not capable of feeling deep and even the deepest interest in things which they will never live to see, is a view of human nature as false as it is abject. Let it be remembered that if individual life is short, the life of the human species is not short; its indefinite duration is practically equivalent to endlessness; and being combined with indefinite capability of improvement, it offers to the imagination and sympathies a large enough object to satisfy any reasonable demand for grandeur of aspiration. If such an object appears small to a mind accustomed to dream of infinite and eternal beatitudes, it will expand into far other dimensions when those baseless fancies shall have receded into the past.

Nor let it be thought that only the more eminent of our species, in mind and heart, are capable of identifying their feelings with the entire life of the human race. This noble capability implies indeed a certain cultivation, but not superior to that which might be, and certainly will be if human improvement continues, the lot of all. Objects far smaller than this, and equally confined within the limits of the earth (though not within those of a single human life), have been found sufficient to inspire large masses and long successions of mankind with an enthusiasm capable of ruling the conduct, and colouring the whole life. Rome was to the entire Roman people, for many generations, as much a religion as Jehovah was to the Jews; nay, much more, for they never fell off from their worship as the Jews did from theirs. And the Romans, otherwise a selfish people, with no very remarkable faculties of any kind except the purely practical, derived nevertheless from this one idea a certain greatness of soul, which manifests itself in all their history where that idea is concerned and nowhere else, and has earned for them the large share of admiration, in other respects not at all deserved, which has been felt for them by most noble-minded persons from that time to this.

When we consider how ardent a sentiment, in favourable circumstances of education, the love of country has become, we cannot judge it impossible that the love of that larger country, the world, may be nursed into similar strength, both as a source of elevated emotion, and as a principle of duty. He who needs any other lesson on this subject than the whole course of ancient history affords, let him read *Cicero de Officiis*. It cannot be said that the standard of morals laid down in that celebrated treatise is a high standard. To our notions it is on many points unduly lax, and admits capitulations of conscience. But on the subject of duty to our country, there is no compromise. That any man, with the smallest pretensions to virtue, could hesitate

to sacrifice life, reputation, family, everything valuable to him, to the love of country, is a supposition which this eminent interpreter of Greek and Latin morality cannot entertain for a moment. If, then, persons could be trained, as we see they were, not only to believe in theory that the good of their country was an object to which all others ought to yield, but to feel this practically as the grand duty of life, so also may they be made to feel the same absolute obligation towards the universal good. A morality grounded on large and wise views of the good of the whole, neither sacrificing the individual to the aggregate nor the aggregate to the individual, but giving to duty on the one hand and to freedom and spontaneity on the other their proper province, would derive its power in the superior natures from sympathy and benevolence and the passion for ideal excellence: in the inferior, from the same feelings, cultivated up to the measure of their capacity, with the superadded force of shame. This exalted morality would not depend for its ascendancy on any hope of reward; but the reward which might be looked for, and the thought of which would be a consolation in suffering, and a support in moments of weakness, would not be a problematical future existence, but the approbation, in this, of those whom we respect, and ideally of all those, dead or living, whom we admire and venerate. For, the thought that our dead parents or friends would have approved our conduct is a scarcely less powerful motive than the knowledge that our living ones do approve it: and the idea that Socrates, or Howard, or Washington, or Antoninus, or Christ, would have sympathised with us, or that we are attempting to do our part in the spirit in which they did theirs, has operated on the very best minds, as a strong incentive to act up to their highest feelings and convictions.

To call these sentiments by the name of morality, exclusively of any other title, is claiming too little for them. They are a real religion; of which, as of other religions, outward good works (the utmost meaning usually suggested by the word morality) are only a part, and are indeed rather the fruits of the religion than the religion itself. The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognised as of the highest excellence, and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire. This condition is fulfilled by the Religion of Humanity in as eminent a degree, and in as high a sense, as by the supernatural religions even in their best manifestations, and far more so than in any of the others.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 104.



The above extract has been made at great length, and from an unimpeachable authority, in order that there might be no danger of misrepresenting the meaning of that which is known as the Religion of Humanity. It seems to suggest the following remarks.

(1) In the first place, is there anything possessed by those who hold this religion which is not possessed by those who hold the faith of Christ? The magnification of the instinct of love of country into love of the whole human race is quite as possible for a Christian as it is for an unbeliever. In fact, love of the whole human race, whatever the spring of that love may be, is emphatically a leading principle of Christian ethics: it is love of the whole human race, of man as man, without reference to colour or blood, that has led Christian nations to abolish slavery, and Christian missionaries to go out and preach throughout the world what they regard as a Gospel. It will scarcely be contended that love for the human race has in practice flourished amongst any men or women so abundantly, so practically, with so great an amount of unselfishness and self-sacrifice, as it has amongst those who act upon the principle that Christ loved all men with an infinite love, and that His disciples are only acting up to their principles when they endeavour to imitate Him. Therefore I do not feel tempted to write one word in depreciation of what Mr. Mill has said concerning the value of love towards the whole human race as a moral principle of action: but I ask whether this is not a recognised principle with the disciples of Christ, and whether there is any reason to believe that the principle will be more generally accepted, and more generally influential, if divorced from faith in Him? The Religion of Humanity, as a doctrine of love towards the whole human race, and as an influence for good founded upon that doctrine, already belongs to him who has accepted the religion of Christ.

(2) But it may be asked, in the next place, whether as a guide to moral conduct and a protection from evil tendencies, as a help against what a Christian would describe as the world, the flesh, and the devil, the Religion of Humanity is any sufficient substitute for that belief in Father, Son, and Holy



Ghost, which the Apostles' Creed supplies. It may perhaps be fairly asserted—certainly there is nothing in Mr. Mill's discussion, above quoted, to contradict the assertion—that regarded from the point of view now suggested, there is nothing in the Religion of Humanity to help a man in his internal struggles with evil. There must be such struggles: the best of men are most conscious of infirmities, and most anxious to get rid of them: it is not every one that can realise the full truth of St Paul's words with reference to his own experience, but there are many who more or less understand what he means, when he cries out, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*<sup>1</sup> In other words, there is such a thing as a sense of sin and unworthiness: is there any conceivable power in the Religion of Humanity to give deliverance? St. Paul said, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord:*<sup>2</sup> can we imagine any one saying, *I have been delivered by the Religion of Humanity?*

It is, of course, possible to deny, and some of our contemporary teachers do deny, that there is such a thing as sin. Those who deny the existence of a God must logically deny the existence of sin also, because sin is the transgression of the law of God: but even upon the supposition of the non-existence of sin, it is difficult to suppose that a man who examines himself carefully and honestly can be altogether satisfied with the results of the self-examination. It is incredible that an honest, humble, modest man will not find in himself and in his daily life faults of which he would gladly get rid, whether he calls them sins or not. Now the Christian religion professes to be able to help men in the process of self-examination and self-improvement: it promises great spiritual help: it sets before them a perfect exemplar, and engages that they shall receive spiritual help in imitating that exemplar: and though it may be said that many who bear the Christian name do not exhibit satisfactory results, still there has undoubtedly been a marvellous change for the better in the world at large since the Gospel was preached. Admirable or

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vii. 25.

even marvellous examples of what can be done in the production of pure life and practice have been exhibited in the world from time to time; and, to say the very least, the promises of supernatural help to those who feel that they need it, and therefore seek for it, must be full of hope and comfort to weary souls which somehow or other feel weighed down by a sense of unworthiness, from which they sigh to be free. Now, can the Religion of Humanity do anything for this class of weary souls? I do not perceive that it can.

(3) I am not, however, surprised that Mr. Mill, having persuaded himself that belief in an Almighty God is not possible, because not logical, should have gladly adopted the views of religion which he has so clearly expressed. Man's nature craves for something which can be called religion; and the Religion of Humanity has the advantage of being capable of being adopted by a philosopher, without any fear of sacrificing his character. In fact, if it may be said without offence, the Religion of Humanity is just the kind of theory which one can imagine a philosopher in his study spinning out of his own brain. But all men are not philosophers, and do not live in studies. The mass of mankind are plain working folks, who live in cottages and workshops and fields. How will the religion suit the wants of this vast majority? The love of mankind, which is the basis of the Religion of Humanity, would lead men, one may suppose, who were influenced by it to *visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*:<sup>1</sup> there is a large number of persons whose lives are given up to this work, as things now are, and it would be no compliment to the Religion of Humanity to suppose that this condition of things would be altered for the worse if the Apostles' Creed were swept away. Suppose then a minister of this religion sitting by the bedside of some sick and suffering person. What comfort could he offer? He must not say the Lord's Prayer: he must not tell the patient that God loves him: he must not try to help him to relieve his conscience from a sense of guilt, by speaking of Jesus Christ as an offering for sin and

<sup>1</sup> St. James i. 27.

as an Advocate with God: the whole of the repertory of comfortable doctrine is gone: and what can be made, at such a time and in such circumstances, of the doctrines of the Religion of Humanity? I am not saying at this moment that they are not true: let it be granted that they are simply and absolutely true: so are the doctrines of geometry, so are many other things which are useful in their proper places: but what comfort can these undoubted truths afford to a patient racked with pain or torn with sorrow, or still more, to the oppressed conscience? A Christian Priest knows how difficult it is, with all the medicines which the Good Physician puts at his command, to minister effectually to the souls of men: he would be in absolute despair, if all these medicines were taken from him, and if he were left in possession of the doctrines of the Religion of Humanity as his one only remedy.

(4) Once more, it seems to me that the Religion of Humanity is essentially deficient as lacking what I will venture to call the element of the Infinite. Mr. Mill approves it because it is so perfectly reasonable, so logical, so simple, so intelligible: a man can evolve it for himself, as Comte and others have done. But is this simplicity, and the consequent absence of the Infinite, the Unsearchable, the Mysterious, quite certainly a sound recommendation of a religion to the attention of mankind? The nations whom the children of Israel displaced made their religions for themselves, and the religions so made were comparatively simple: whereas the religion of those who invaded and supplanted these nations was built upon mystery, and involved the incomprehensible idea of a self-existing Being—the I AM—ὁ ὢν—Ego sum, qui sum: yet who will say that the religion of the Israelites was not infinitely in advance of all those which it displaced? Those other religions we do not even seriously discuss: they belong to the dark days of ignorance: whereas the foundation of the religion of Israel stands firm to the present age, and though Mr. Mill and others tell us that it is logically untenable, the general verdict of mankind is the other way. The human soul seems to need the introduction of the Infinite into any sufficing scheme of worship: man can worship the Infinite, and gain spiritual

elevation for himself in so doing: he cannot safely worship any person or thing, the height and length and depth and breadth of which he can measure with the measuring rod of his own intellect. Hence the absence of the idea of the Infinite, which makes the Religion of Humanity easily intelligible, may be held to render it also untenable and unprofitable.

On the whole, therefore, the Religion of Humanity, as a substitute for the Religion of Christ, seems to be doomed to failure: it is quite inconceivable (so at least it appears to me) that men and women should ever come to the apostles of such a religion to find rest to their souls.<sup>1</sup>

2. The second substitute proposed for the Apostles' Creed is some form of religion which shall be reckoned as Christian; in fact, a reformed Christianity; a Christianity adapted to an enlightened age, by omitting all that is regarded as untenable in the light of criticism and science.

The attempt to modify the religion of the Church, in accordance with opinions suggested by other religions or by philosophical speculations, is nothing new. The history of Gnosticism, of Arianism, and of many or all the heresies of the early centuries, illustrates this position. The efforts of the various Councils and of ecclesiastical writers were chiefly directed to vindicate Catholic truth, not against those who utterly denied it, but against those who were prepared to hold it subject to

<sup>1</sup> A very striking paper on *Positivism*, viewed from the standpoint of the future life of mankind, was read by the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour at the Manchester Church Congress. I quote one passage as bearing upon the prospects of the Religion of Humanity. 'The Religion of Humanity, divorced from any other religion, is professed by but a small, and in many respects a peculiar, sect. The cultivation of emotions at high tension towards humanity, deliberately dissociated from the cultivation of religious feeling towards God, has never yet been practised on a large scale. We have so far had only laboratory experiments. There has been no attempt to manufacture in bulk, and even if it had been otherwise, the conclusion to be drawn must for a long time have remained doubtful. For the success of such attempts greatly depends on the character of the social medium in which they are carried on; and if, as I should hope, the existing social medium is favourable to the growth of philanthropic feelings, its character is largely due to the action of Christianity. It remains to be proved whether, if Christianity were destroyed, a "Religion of Humanity" could long maintain for itself the atmosphere in which alone it could permanently flourish.'



more or less important limitations. The Socinian and other heresies of later days are in like manner, for the most part at least, limitations and consequently perversions, but not absolute denials, of the Christian faith. Hence it is not to be wondered at, if difficulties with regard to the Apostles' Creed, arising out of modern investigations or modern habits of thought, should lead those who desire in some manner to follow Christ to attempt to make such modifications in the accepted doctrines of the Church, as shall enable them (as they think) to hold fast the essential and the necessary, and to avoid everything to which their reason objects. It is in reality a grand tribute to the sterling character of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a proof of the strong hold which it asserts upon the human heart, that there should be so much anxiety, as experience proves that there is, to hold on to some modification of the Christian faith, when for any cause the Catholic faith in its completeness appears to be untenable. It would seem that a new effort in this direction has lately been made. In saying this, I do not refer directly to the story of 'Robert Elsmere,' which has had so remarkable a circulation, and which undoubtedly represents a current of thought which is now more or less prevalent, but to a newspaper, which represents the views of Robert Elsmere as having actually taken form, and from which the following is an extract:

A sect has been formed that calls itself 'The New Brotherhood of Christ;' the word 'Christ' standing in this instance for the name of an ideal man, the idea of divinity being altogether obliterated from the minds of the worshippers, at least so far as Christ is concerned. The outward and conspicuous mark of membership of the New Brotherhood is a silver badge, bearing the head of Christ. The place of meeting, a large hall, not altogether of bald simplicity as regards its interior, for the two great inscriptions which represent the only articles of the new faith gleam from the walls. These inscriptions are respectively, 'In Thee, O Eternal, have I put my trust,' 'This do in remembrance of Me.' The recesses on either side of the hall are lined with white marble, and are destined, the one to hold the names of the living members of the Brotherhood; the other to commemorate those who have passed away. On the walls of the building are copies of Giotto's Paduan Virtues—Faith, Fortitude, Charity, and the like.



The public service used by the Brotherhood is extreme in its simplicity. The opening prayer is recited by everybody present standing; the tone of the prayer being essentially modern and answering to modern need. Then follows some passage from the life of Christ, read and expounded by the leader of the Brotherhood. After the address a hymn or psalm (there being only seven hymns and an equal number of psalms in the little service-book, choice on this head is not very difficult). The service concludes with a short prayer, also repeated standing, a commendation of the individuals, the Brotherhood, the nation, the world, to God; after this the Lord's Prayer. After a silent pause of 'recollection,' the leader dismisses the assembly with these words, 'Go in peace, in the love of God, and in the memory of His servant Jesus.' So much for the ritual of the Brotherhood. The organisation is simple, but intended to be far-reaching. Each 'department' is worked by committees under a certain council. In each of these committees are working-men, and it is the object of everybody concerned to make the workman element more and more real and efficient. By the rules of the Brotherhood, every member is bound to some work in connection with it during the year, be it little or much, as he or she is able. Every meeting or undertaking whatsoever opens with the special 'word' or formula of the society, 'This do in remembrance of Me.'

I do not know whether the description contained in the preceding paragraph corresponds to an actual fact, or whether it represents as realised a conception taken from 'Robert Elsmere,' and expressed almost in the language of that book. On either supposition it corresponds to a feeling which undoubtedly exists, and which perhaps it may be said was at this epoch in Christian history almost inevitable. It is scarcely to be imagined that all of those who have been brought up in the faith and love of Christ, who have known the enthusiasm which this faith and this love inspire, could upon the hard demand of the intellect, bred by critical investigation, or by scientific research, or by the reception of conclusions at which critics and men of science have arrived, cast away their convictions like an old worn-out glove, and think no more about them. I do not say that this simple and entire abandonment of a spiritual position which has been held from childhood upward is not possible: demonstrations of its possibility have come within my

own observation : but I suggest that there are probably not a few cases in real life of that experience which has been depicted by the novelist, namely, that of men and women who have been brought up in the school of Christ, who have learnt lessons in that school which they cannot forget, who have somehow found their faith give away under them, and have felt an instinct to cling to the wreck of their Creed when the supernatural portion of it has been surrendered. What more probable than that some of the more warm-hearted and enthusiastic amongst such bereaved men and women should endeavour to form a new religion or brotherhood, the basis of which should be the human nature, character, and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth—should do, in fact, something like that which in the paragraph above quoted is represented as being actually done ?

Now it is evident that to Mr Mill, and to those who put forward the Religion of Humanity, this new religion will be almost as flat heresy as the old religion of the Church. It recognises an Eternal Being, apparently an Almighty Father ; it makes use of the Lord's Prayer, and so acknowledges the doctrine of sin, of temptation, and of the need of Divine protection. Moreover, it is based upon the unique character of Jesus Christ and of His life : passages of His life appear to be the chief instruments of public edification : and everything is to be done 'in remembrance of Him.' The grand line of separation between this new sect and the Church appears to be that which depends upon the omission of all that is miraculous in the Lord's life. He is simply Jesus of Nazareth : the first and most notable leader of men : the chief prophet of God : one to be followed and loved and imitated with every feeling of enthusiasm : but not more than this. A Christian teacher would be disposed to say to a man who had won his way out of atheism, or out of any form of heathenism or any alien religion, into this view of the Lord Jesus, *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God* :<sup>1</sup> but the expression of hopefulness cannot be very strong in the case of those, who have descended to this point of view from that which the Church supplies. The descent is in reality

<sup>1</sup> St Mark xii. 34.

infinite : it is only measured by the distance between the Divine and the human : to have emptied Himself and so of His own will taken the form of man, and to have been born under precisely the same conditions as the rest of mankind, are two things admitting of no comparison. It is difficult to believe that the enthusiasm for the name and the cross of Jesus Christ, which has proved the life of the Church, will be found to be a permanent support of this new religion, which omits the very ground and foundation upon which the power of the old religion rests.

For it must never be forgotten in estimating the power of the new religion in question, and of some other quasi-religious schemes of our own times, that the men who devise these schemes are men who have been brought up in the atmosphere of the Christian faith, and under the influence of the feelings towards Jesus Christ which that faith naturally generates. Take the solemn formula, *Do this in remembrance of Me*,<sup>1</sup> which appears to be almost the password of the new sect : examine that formula and its history : it was spoken in connection with the Lord's death : it is the form of command given by Christ to keep that death in remembrance : but if that death be let down to the ordinary level of human death, will not the command to *shew it till He come*,<sup>2</sup> lose its power, and will not the enthusiasm which the words imply to a Christian mind gradually fade away ? It is to be presumed that the founders of the sect imagine that it will not : time alone can prove what the result will be : but certainly it seems not improbable that this modified religion of Christ, this religion freed from those elements which the Church has ever regarded as belonging to its very essence, will assume to those who have been brought up in the belief that Jesus Christ was only a man, a character very different from that which it assumes to those who have been educated in the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In other words, it seems almost certain that the enthusiasm, which is necessary to give life to a religion, will be found wanting when the first or second generation of worshippers has passed

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 26.

away. The scheme seems just to lack the principle which has given life to the religion of Christ. All the burning enthusiasm of St. Paul and the rest of the Apostles, which found expression in such language as the following : *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*<sup>1</sup>—all this burning enthusiasm seems simply impossible in the case of this emasculated form of Christianity : it is the religion of Christ, without the heart, without the life and the blood. If the Christian Creed be not true, it must eventually perish ; but it will never find a sufficient substitute in the teaching of the ‘New Brotherhood of Christ.’ It may be safely prophesied that the new faith, though it may satisfy a sect, will never conquer the world.<sup>2</sup>

On the whole, then, I have no hesitation in expressing a decided opinion that no form of religion has been as yet devised, or is likely to be devised, which will be accepted as a substitute for the religion of Christ, among the influential races of the world. I can scarcely believe that the propounders of new religious schemes expect that this should be so. They would probably say that the general acceptance of a scheme is not conclusive evidence of its truth ; that, on the other hand, the possessors of truth have very generally been in the minority. Upon one point, however, all those who do not accept the Christian Creed would probably agree, namely, that the Creed will wear out, that it has already lost much of its influence with the educated part of mankind, that the time will come when it

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 35-39.

<sup>2</sup> Since the above paragraphs were written, I believe that some further steps have been taken to realise the idea of the New Brotherhood. I do not know what is the present position of the scheme ; whatever it may be, my argument is not affected, inasmuch as it depends upon the future, not upon the present.



will be generally recognised as untenable. This is a view of the matter with which it is on all grounds desirable to deal in the most distinct manner possible.

Of course a disciple of Christ, standing upon Christian ground, may say—I do not believe in the possibility of the ruin of the Church and of the Faith, because I believe in Christ. The Lord's words and promises are very distinct. *Upon this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*<sup>1</sup> *I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.*<sup>2</sup> *I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*<sup>3</sup> No one who accepts such language as the utterance of Him who came to reveal the truth, and who was Himself emphatically the Truth, can have any doubt as to the indefectibility in some form of the Church of Christ, and of the Creed upon which it rests. But the question which it is desired to discuss just now is this, whether it is not possible to form an opinion concerning the future of the Church and the Creed, upon grounds of experience and of general reasoning, putting aside for the moment those grounds of assurance which belong exclusively to disciples of Christ.

In the first place it may be remarked, that the anticipation of the failure of the Church of Christ in the world is a very old story indeed. That phrase of the Apostle which speaks of Jesus Christ being *crucified in weakness, yet living by the power of God*,<sup>4</sup> may be regarded as a description of the history of the early progress of the Church and Creed. The cross of Christ was *to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness*,<sup>5</sup> but somehow also it was *both to Jew and Greek the power of God and the wisdom of God*.<sup>6</sup> In other words, experience has proved that *although the kings of the earth might set themselves up, and the rulers take counsel against the Lord and against His anointed*,<sup>7</sup> and although wise men might disapprove, and foolish men might mock, still there has been in fact a power of growth in

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xvi. 18.<sup>2</sup> St. John xiv. 16.<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 20.<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 4.<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23.<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. i. 24.<sup>7</sup> Ps. ii. 2.



the Church, with which it has been found impossible successfully to contend. I am not saying just now, that this proves the Creed of the Church to be true; but it does prove most conclusively that no strong argument for the probable failure of the influence of the Church, and for the general abandonment of the Creed, is to be found in any confident expression of opinion that the end is near. If it be said that the forces opposed to the Creed are now of a different kind from those which existed formerly, and that criticism and science will effect that which was not possible in less enlightened days, we may say that this is matter of speculation and prophecy, and that speculation and prophecy do not count for much. Time will shew.

This negative view of the case is, however, manifestly insufficient and unsatisfying; and I should therefore desire to draw attention to the more positive view, and to insist that, as a matter of fact, there are evidences of vitality both in the Church and in the Creed, such as it is difficult or impossible for any honest man to deny. It must be sorrowfully admitted—at all events the present writer feels bound to admit—that there is much in the present condition of Christendom, which argues the absence of health and robust strength from many portions of the Church of Christ. Whether we look to East or West, it is impossible not to perceive that things are in many respects in a condition in which they should not be, and in which they would not be, if the spirit of primitive love and zeal animated the whole body of Christ, and if there were no divisions and jealousies, and no unrighteous assumptions of precedence and superiority, and even supremacy, amongst those who are all His brethren. Moreover, it is impossible to deny, that in a large portion of Christendom the popular presentation of the religion of Christ is so much overlaid with superstitious practices, and so adulterated by a mixture of doctrines neither Scriptural nor primitive, that the essence of the Faith, as exhibited in the Creeds of the Church, is sadly disguised and deformed. It may be fairly maintained that not a little of the virulent hatred of the Christian religion, which is manifested in certain parts of Europe, may be justly charged to the account of the natural guardians of the

Faith, who have tolerated and still tolerate such undeniable abuses as have long existed, and are even on the increase. Any thoughtful man, who contemplates Christendom in this century, may justifiably adopt the words of the Prophet, and say, *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*<sup>1</sup> Let all this be set forth with perfect honesty and in all its bitter fulness. No enemy without can recognise more completely the cracks and faults in the bulwarks of our Zion, than the inhabitants and soldiers within the city. But when all that can be said has been said on this side of the question, there is much to be advanced on the other side. And this I will now attempt to do in a few words.

I shall confine attention as much as possible to the phenomena connected with England and the English race: not because I believe England to have a monopoly of Christian belief and Christian feeling, but because it is difficult rightly to estimate the real condition of religion in countries with which we are not familiar, and also because, to the readers of this book, the religious state of their own country is both more familiar and more interesting than that of others can possibly be.

Fixing our minds on England then, is there the smallest ground for asserting that the Christian Creed has lost its hold upon the heart and mind of the country? That it is not so effective in its influence as could be wished, that there is much professed atheism, infidelity, secularism, materialism, as well as much ungodly and unchristian living, will be at once conceded as undoubted matter of fact. Satan is still in a terrible sense the Prince of this world, and the obstacles which stand between men's souls and Christ are as great as ever they were: but is it not certain, that whatever test is applied to ascertain the truth, the result will be the conclusion that the name of Christ, the words of Christ, the faith of Christ, the love of Christ, are by far the most general and most powerful influences existing in England in the present day? The following may be taken

<sup>1</sup> Jer. ix. 1.

as some of the tests which may be applied: the outward condition of our churches, and the abundance of new places of Christian worship; the immense yearly production of theological and religious literature, exceeding that in almost any other branch;<sup>1</sup> the cheap publication on a large scale of the Holy Scriptures, both in English and in almost every known language;<sup>2</sup> the efforts made to render the Holy Scriptures

<sup>1</sup> According to the *Publishers' Circular*, the number of new books published in 1888, under the head of *Theology, Sermons, Biblical, &c.*, was 748, as against 630 *Educational, Classical, and Philological*, 377 *History, Biography, &c.*, and 104 *Arts, Sciences, and Illustrated Works*. The only class exceeding the Theological is that of *Novels, Tales, and other Fiction*, which stands for 929. It perhaps ought also to be borne in mind that not a little biography has a distinctly religious character. The whole number of new books of all kinds recorded for 1888 is 4,960; so that theology may take credit for more than one-seventh of the whole production of the year. The proportion was about the same for 1887.

The number of books and tracts issued by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge from April 1, 1888, to March 31, 1889, was as follows:

|                                 |           |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Bibles . . . . .                | 161,552   |
| New Testaments . . . . .        | 30,601    |
| Book of Common Prayer . . . . . | 369,716   |
| Other bound Books . . . . .     | 5,841,164 |
| Tracts . . . . .                | 4,967,166 |

Amongst the bound books are included some which are not of a distinctly religious character: allowing one-half on this account, we have still an issue in one year of about eight millions of religious books and tracts, besides the Holy Scriptures and the Book of Common Prayer, from the office of one Society.

The Religious Tract Society in its Report for the same year states that 'the total circulation from the Home Depôt, including books, tracts, periodicals (counted in numbers), cards, and miscellaneous issues, has reached 62,696,190, of which 25,840,900 are tracts. The issues from Foreign Depôts may be safely stated at 15,000,000, making a total circulation of 77,696,190, and of 2,680,006,500 since the formation of the Society.'

<sup>2</sup> The following table shews the number of copies of the Holy Scriptures, or portions of the same, issued by the British and Foreign Bible Society during the year ending March 31, 1889:

|                                                | Bibles. | New Testaments. | Portions. | Total.    |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|
| English, Welsh, and a few }<br>Irish . . . . . | 578,586 | 750,080         | 128,698   | 1,457,364 |
| Foreign . . . . .                              | 231,555 | 733,602         | 1,254,683 | 2,219,840 |
| Total . . . . .                                | 810,141 | 1,483,682       | 1,383,381 | 3,677,204 |

intelligible, both by a laborious revision of the existing translation, and by commentaries both learned and practical; the contributions made in almost, if not quite, every parish in the kingdom to support the work of Christ in foreign parts, founded as such contributions are upon the command of Christ to His Apostles to *go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature*; <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> the readiness with which men of high education and refinement give up all home prospects and comforts, in order that they may *preach among the Gentiles* what they believe to be *the unsearchable riches of Christ*; <sup>3</sup> more perhaps than all these, the manner and degree in which the thought of Christ as a living Lord and Master influences the daily conduct of thousands, both rich and poor, both learned and ignorant. Of course there is much to be placed upon the other side of the account. If it should be argued that on the hypothesis of Jesus Christ being all that His disciples believe Him to be, His kingdom ought to have been, would have been, must have been, greater and more pervading than it is, His disciples may well hang down their heads with shame, and confess that the argument is one which is only too forcible: but still, making every allowance, and grieving, as we may well do, that any such allowance should have to be made, let the position of the Church and the Creed be tried by any and all of the tests which have been specified, and we seem infallibly to arrive at the conclusion, that both the one and the other are still living things—so full of life, indeed, that we may smile at the notion of early destruction, and may hope and pray for such a growth in the future as former centuries have not seen.

Nay, it is scarcely paradoxical to assert that an argument for believing in the vitality of the religion of Christ is to be found even in those divisions amongst Christians, which give rise to the numerous sects and denominations of the nineteenth

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark xvi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> The annual contributions from Great Britain and Ireland towards the work of Foreign Missions may be reckoned at a million and a quarter sterling, and appear to be steadily increasing. The amount in 1871 exceeded 850,000*l.*: a million was reached in 1873, since which date the growth has been steady.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iii. 8.



century. 'Whitaker's Almanack' gives us the titles of more than two hundred religious bodies having certified places of worship, and informs us that the number of such places certified, recorded, and on the register on November 1, 1888, was 25,857—an increase of 630 in the year. This is a remarkable fact, one not to be regarded with entire satisfaction by those who would delight to see the unity of the Church of Christ made visible by unity of creed and unity of worship, but still one that makes it manifest that the name of Christ is widely and deeply precious, and that the religious feeling of the nation finds its most natural and its widest expression in some form of Christian thought. It is difficult to believe that a religion which indicates such power of springing up (as it were) spontaneously from the ground of the human heart, though the growth of the plant be not unfrequently imperfect and eccentric, can ever be eradicated, or that it can have anything less or other than a divine origin.

In these remarks I have made special reference to England, as already explained, because I am an Englishman and am writing for Englishmen; but it is impossible for any Englishman to be so modest or so ignorant, as not to perceive the magnitude of the influence produced by England and English-speaking people upon the religion, as upon the politics, of the world. It is difficult to conceive of circumstances, which will be able to prevent the English language from being a principal factor in the world's future. It is also unquestionable, that wherever the English language establishes itself, there also will the name of Christ be proclaimed, and the worship of God in Him established upon the basis of the Apostles' Creed. Hence upon mere general principles of calculation, it is to be expected that a great future is before the English Church; a great future of preaching the Gospel and establishing the kingdom of Christ. In saying which I by no means intend to disparage other Christian influences: in its proper place I have already recognised the broad sense in which belief in the Holy Catholic Church may be held: but I cannot do otherwise than feel that the most important post—the post upon the successful occupation of which the success of other efforts very much depends—has



been assigned to that ancient portion of the Church which we describe as the Church of England.

This, however, is not a suitable occasion for discussing at any length the privileges and responsibilities of the Church of England. It is more in accordance with the general purpose and conception of this book, that it should close with an emphatic assertion of the fact, that the general prosperity of the kingdom of Christ depends mainly upon individual faith, and love, and loyalty. At all events, it has been the intention and desire of the author to address himself, not so much to the consideration of the prospects of religion in the future upon a broad scale, as to the needs of individual souls at this present period of Christian history.

If anything has been written, which the reader feels to have been helpful to him, anything which has tended to clear away difficulties, or to shew him how best to meet them, anything that has brought his soul nearer to Christ, anything which has suggested to his mind that question and confession of St. Peter, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*<sup>1</sup>—then the author is more than satisfied.

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<sup>1</sup> St. John vi. 68.

GLORY BE TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON: AND TO THE HOLY GHOST;

AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, IS NOW, AND EVER SHALL BE: WORLD WITHOUT END.

AMEN.



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